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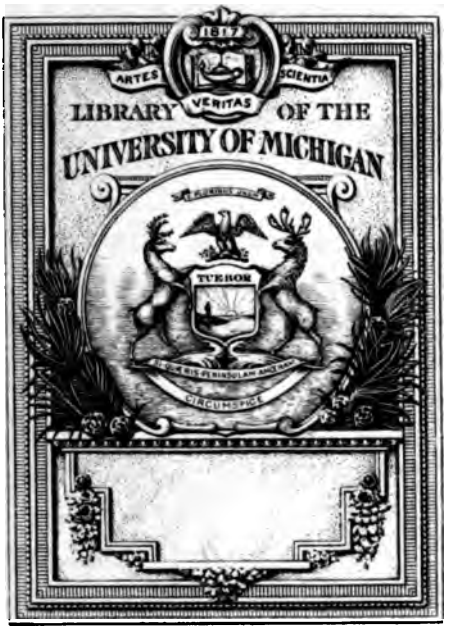
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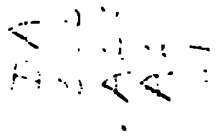

MEMOIRS OF A SOCIAL ATOM

MEMOIRS OF A SOCIAL ATOM

By
W. E. ADAMS
Author of "Our American Cousins," etc.

VOL. I.

WITH PORTRAITS

London: HUTCHINSON & CO.
Paternoster Row 1903

In grateful remembrance of many years of service and association, I dedicate this work to the memory of

JOSEPH COWEN, M.P.

whose influence in journalism, courage in politics, and commanding eloquence in the tribunes of the people, will ever be numbered among the inspiring traditions of Northern England.

PREFACE

THE greater portion of the matter composing these pages was printed as a series of articles in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 1901—1902. The articles themselves were written in Madeira during a compulsory residence there in the winter of 1900—1901. Hearty thanks are due to the proprietors of the paper for permission to reproduce them in the present form.

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INTRODUCTION

I CALL myself a Social Atom—a small speck on the surface of society. The term indicates my insignificance. I have mingled with no great people, been admitted to no great secrets, met with no great adventures, witnessed no great events, taken part in no great transactions. In a word, I am just an ordinary person: no better, and I hope no worse, than the ordinary run of my neighbours. Being thus so completely undistinguished in every way, why have I had the conceit or the impudence to intrude upon the attention of the public? The intrusion, I shall expect to be told, might have been understood, or at all events forgiven, in a younger man; but in one who has reached, perhaps has passed, the years of discretion, the offence, if not absolutely without excuse, is hardly slight enough to escape the general censure. But a word in explanation before sentence is pronounced.

It has been said that every man has in him the making of at least one good novel. The

gentleman who first impressed this idea upon me was distinguished in science, but was yet desirous of trying the experiment of writing a novel himself. As the proposition was not accepted, we have no means of knowing how far the theory in his case would have stood the test of experiment. But if every man in certain given circumstances may be considered capable of writing (perhaps I ought to say of producing) one good novel, might we not assume with even greater reasonableness that every man of advanced age has seen and heard enough in the course of his career to enable him to write a book of recollections? Anyway, I think it may fairly be held that no man can go through the world with his eyes open for seventy years without seeing much that would, if intelligently explained and discussed, interest (and maybe instruct) the general public.

Holding this view, I hope to be pardoned for putting into some sort of literary form a few recollections of events and circumstances that have come under my own observation since 1832. The events and circumstances here indicated are not of high importance, although, as many of them concern the common people and the hopes and aspirations of the common people, they ought not to be the less appreciated, nor perhaps the less attractive,

on that account. It is, after all, the common people who constitute society—society without the capital letter ; for "the nation in all ages," as Mr. Bright once said, "live in cottages."

Books of recollections constitute what may be called a favourite class of literature. Though they cannot of course compete with novels, they stand as high in public favour, let us say, as poetry and the drama. And it is a wholesome taste—the taste for reading the records of actual occurrences and adventures. Actors, artists, authors, journalists, propagandists, politicians, and even statesmen, have from time to time told the world what they knew about themselves, what they thought of other people, what they remembered of the things that transpired in their day and generation. All these productions are more or less interesting—some because the writer is himself an interesting personage, others because he deals with incidents of stirring or tragic character, others again because he has light and agreeable stories to tell and a light and agreeable way of telling them.

I have read many such books, and have derived profit and pleasure from all. Maybe I can make a not unreadable contribution to that branch of literature myself. But I have already disclaimed any pretension to importance. My recollections,

for the most part, will relate to the commonplace experiences of a humble worker in a humble sphere of life. I repeat, however, that they may not lack interest on that account. I recollect that one of the most entertaining books I ever read was the "Autobiography of a Working Man." It was published when I was still a youth. The character of the book may be judged from the title. It was simply the record of the trials and troubles, the joys and the sorrows, of a journeyman of the period. But the story was told intelligently and without pretence, and so it received, I remember, a cordial welcome from both the press and the public. A somewhat similar welcome—which, however, was perhaps less deserved in these cases—was extended to other works of the same complexion, the "Autobiography of a Beggar Boy" and the "Autobiography of One who has Whistled at the Plough." The examples mentioned are at all events encouraging.

Another consideration has had much weight in inspiring the present enterprise. In the autumn of 1866, Mr. James Watson, an old Radical publisher who had been imprisoned in the days of the struggle for a free press, and who had been closely concerned in all the Radical movements of the previous forty years, was on a visit to

Blaydon-on-Tyne. I had known Mr. Watson some years before, knew something of his history and his struggles, knew also that few men of my acquaintance could furnish the world with so graphic a narrative of the agitations in which he had taken part. The gentleman who entertained Mr. Watson at Blaydon, a still older friend than I was, urged him to write out his recollections. I added my own entreaties. Mr. Watson, who was then an old man, would promise nothing, and eventually did nothing. So was lost a wealth of memorable reminiscences that can never now be chronicled. Much the same thing happened later, when Mr. George Julian Harney was contributing articles to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. He, too, was urged to write down his recollections—particularly his recollections of the Chartist agitation, in which he had played a leading and important part. Mr. Harney promised to consider the proposal, and there the matter ended. It occurred to me at these times that I ought not to exempt myself from the pressure of my own exhortations, more especially as I also had had some small connection with the movements in which Watson and Harney had played conspicuous *rôles*. If I have taken my own medicine, it is at least good evidence that I had faith in its virtues.

One cannot be unmindful of the fact, even before putting a single line on paper, that personal memoirs or recollections cannot be recorded without an appearance of egotism that may be distasteful, not to say disgusting, to other people. The eternal "I" asserts itself in every chapter and in almost every sentence. This is naturally an enormous disadvantage, since it excites a prejudice against the writer. Yet there is no way out of the difficulty except by dealing with events in which one has personally acted as if one was merely a spectator of them. Such a process is all the more unsatisfactory because it creates the impression that the narrative is rather a work of imagination than a register of actual occurrences.

And then there is that other difficulty which confronts the faithful narrator—the difficulty of discriminating between what interests himself and what will interest the reader. A trivial incident may appear of considerable importance to the person who witnessed it, but of no consequence whatever to the person who did not. Matters that interest ourselves loom large in our own eyes, but contract to small dimensions in the eyes of others. It is as if one looked at an object from the right end of a telescope, while another looked at the same object from the wrong end. Besides, readers are

of different tastes. What will please one class will not attract even the languid attention of another class. The best judges are often deceived in questions of popular likes and dislikes. Neither authors nor playwrights, however many their triumphs, are uniformly successful in gauging them. How, then, may a humbler scribe expect to fare? Well, he can only exercise his own judgment to the best of his own ability. The task is delicate, not to say perplexing. Whether success or failure attend the effort, the effort itself may be worth undertaking. The result is in other hands.

MEMOIRS OF A SOCIAL ATOM

CHAPTER I

A FASHIONABLE TOWN

THE town of Cheltenham has many distinctions, among the rest that of being the first to welcome the present writer. This interesting event occurred in the year of the great Reform Bill, and on the anniversary in that year of the birthday of General Washington. If the event had never occurred, the present history would never have been written. Maybe we have not much to be thankful for. Anyway, this bit of fooling, exquisite or otherwise, will serve to introduce "the birthplace of Podgers." Nothing further need be said on the subject, except that the statement can be verified, if anybody should want to verify it, by consulting the register of baptisms at the old Parish Church for February 11th, 1832.

Now that I have got over the preliminary difficulty of a modest narrator—cantered over it, as the late Mr. W. E. Forster, the projector of the Education Bill of 1870, thought he had cantered over the religious difficulty—I may perhaps profitably proceed to give some account of an old-fashioned fashionable resort. The account could be expanded into a volume; but as a policy of expansion in this case, whatever may be its effect on the future of the United States, would totally upset the author's scheme of proportion, the historical account at all events shall be restricted to a single chapter.

Cheltenham, as has been said, is a town of many distinctions. It owes its reputation—almost its very existence—to its mineral waters. These waters drew to the little resort which nestled under the spurs of the Cotswold Range the rank and fashion of an earlier age. Even Royalty, down in the doldrums, patronised it. Wherefore Cheltenham gave itself airs. Long before Scarborough was known as a rendezvous of health-seekers and holiday-makers, the town on the Chelt claimed the title of Queen of Watering Places. It was a rival of Bath as far back as the reign of Beau Brummel. There were Pump Rooms in many quarters—the Old Wells, the Montpellier, the Pittville, all surrounded with lovely walks and

gardens—besides the Cambray Spa, which was little larger than a Paris kiosk. Visitors of all sorts hobnobbed in the rotundas with lords and ladies of high degree. It was in the Old Well Walk—a magnificent avenue of elms long since displaced by villa residences—that old Mr. Coutts, the banker, fell in love with a pretty actress, made her Mrs. Coutts, and left her a large fortune. Harriet Mellon, the fortunate actress, was known afterwards as the Duchess of St. Albans. Owing to its sheltered situation, its pleasant environs, its soft and agreeable climate, the town became the favourite residence of so many retired veterans from India that it acquired the sobriquet of "Asia Minor."

It used to be said of a certain city in America that you couldn't fire a shot gun in any direction without hitting a colonel. Much the same joke might be made about Cheltenham. Half-pay officers abounded there. The place, so to say, was redolent of Eastern battles. Sir Harry Smith, the hero of Aliwal, was visiting it with his wife in 1847—the popular couple from whom are derived the names of three important towns in South Africa, Harrismith, Ladysmith, and Aliwal North. Even among the boys the almost exclusive subject of conversation at the time was the presence of the distinguished warrior. Fresh from his triumphs

in the Punjaub, Sir Harry was presented with an address from the inhabitants by the Master of the Ceremonies—then the most important public functionary in the town, for his services were required to regulate and control the diversions of fashionable society. The great general is recorded as having delivered in reply a "stirring address" to the crowd that had assembled in the garden of his hotel. Cheltenham was associated, before and afterwards, with other famous Anglo-Indians. Lord Ellenborough, once Viceroy of India, had his seat in the neighbourhood. The two sons of the poet Burns, both military men, retired there to end their days in quietude and seclusion. Sir Robert Sale, who was killed at the battle of Moodkee, had been a resident in the town; and Lady Sale, the story of whose captivity in Cabul is one of the romances of Indian history, was still residing there when the news of her husband's death was received. And it was from the same place that Sir Charles James Napier, after the disastrous battle of Chillianwallah, was summoned to take command of the Indian army, the Duke of Wellington using on the occasion the memorable words—"If you don't go, I must."

The waters were supposed to be the chief attraction of the town. They were held in great esteem by the visitors; but by the poorer inhabitants

they were not esteemed and hardly known at all. Companions of my youth used now and then to make Sunday morning excursions to an old shanty on Bay's Hill, there to make wry faces over draughts from a neighbouring spring, regardless of the consequences to health or comfort. But ailing people went to Cheltenham as they went to Bath, and as they still go to Harrogate and Llandrindod, to drink the waters. Old George the Third set the fashion in the last century. His Majesty, however, seems to have had faith in less orthodox agencies than mineral springs. A family of farriers known as the Whitworth Doctors were flourishing in Lancashire at the time. One of these, William Howitt tells us, was summoned to Cheltenham to attend the Princess Elizabeth, for whose complaint he prescribed pinches of his famous snuff!

The curative qualities of the Cheltenham springs have not escaped satire, as witness the well-known epitaph :—

> Here lie I and my three daughters,
> Killed by drinking the Cheltenham waters.
> If we had stuck to Epsom salts,
> We'd not been lying in these here vaults.

The graveyard surrounding the old Parish Church is credited with containing a stone bearing the celebrated inscription. But the stone and the

inscription are alike apocryphal. At all events I never saw it myself, nor, I think, has anybody else.[1] There is, however, nothing in the absurdity of the epitaph to warrant the assumption that it would not have been sanctioned by the church authorities in less fastidious days than ours; for in the same graveyard may still be seen the tombstone of a pig-killer with this gruesome doggerel :—

Here lies John Higgs,
A famous man for killing pigs;
For killing pigs was his delight,
Both morning, afternoon, and night.
Both heat and cold he did endure,
Which no physician could e'er cure.
His knife is laid, his work is done;
I hope to heaven his soul is gone.

The town, however, had other attractions besides its waters. A Chartist orator, addressing a handful of adherents under a fine old willow in the Promenade, described the place as a Town of Gardens. The description was quite accurate.

[1] This was written before a correspondence on the subject took place in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* in 1902. Major A. C. Cunningham, writing from Cheltenham, therein stated that he had "read the epitaph many years ago in the old cemetery in the High Street, Cheltenham," and that his brother, "now the Vicar of Marnham, Notts," also read it, and remembered having done so. Here was the first positive assertion I ever saw in print of anybody having seen the lines on a tombstone. The "old cemetery in the High Street" was the new cemetery when I was a boy. For twenty years I was as familiar with it as I was with any part of the town; yet I never saw or even heard of the epitaph till long

Every house, however humble, had ample space in front or rear for the cultivation of flowers or vegetables. Even the business quarters were not built up as they are elsewhere. There were trees everywhere—in squares and crescents, in walks and drives, in streets and roads. The Promenade, which starts from the very centre of the town, was a triple row of trees. Boulevards! When I first went to Paris, I found I had been familiar with boulevards from childhood—only they bore another name at home. Tennyson must have had Cheltenham in his mind (for, as we shall see later, he was once a resident) when he wrote the lines :—

> A goodly place,
> A realm of pleasaunce, many a mound
> And many a shadow chequer'd lawn
> Full of the city's stilly sound.

The great actor, William Charles Macready, who ended his days in the town, wrote thus to his friend Lady Pollock :—"I presume you, who 'have seen

afterwards. Major Cunningham, in a later communication, submitted that the inscription had been erased, since it could not now be found. So the matter stands pretty much where it stood before. Early recollections are not always to be trusted, unless they are supported by documentary or other evidence. For example, in regard to this very epitaph, I know a clergyman in the North of England who is, or rather was, as positive on the subject as Major Cunningham—only he had seen the doggerel, not in the cemetery, but in the parish churchyard! And the witness in this case even recollected the location of the gravestone!

the cities and manners of many men,' have not omitted Cheltenham in your wide survey. If so, you will not dissent from my opinion of its beauty. I do not think there is a town in England or out of it laid out with so much taste, such a continual mixture of garden, villa, street, and avenue." Macready speaks in the same letter of the hills that encompass it, "objects and interests of beauty observable from every point." One of the most ineffaceable memories of my boyhood is a view of the town from Cleeve Cloud shortly after dawn on a morning in summer. The white terraces and streets, embosomed in trees and shining like burnished silver in the brilliant sun, gave the place the appearance of an enchanted city. No prospect in fairyland itself could have presented a fairer picture than Cheltenham did then. And the same delightful vision is still at the command of all who take the trouble to ascend the heights to look for it.

The surroundings of the town are even more lovely than the town itself. Leckhampton Hill on the one side and the Cleeve Hills on the other, clothed with copse and verdure, except where broken into cliffs or scarred with quarries, are within an easy walk, while away in the distance may be seen the Malvern Range, with the silvery Severn creeping past Upton and Tewkesbury and

Gloucester and many another old-fashioned settlement to the Bristol Channel. Beyond Leckhampton Hill, or rather on the further side of it, was one of the reputed sources of the Thames. It was called the Seven Springs ; it was a favourite resort for excursionists from Cheltenham and Gloucester ; and it was the Mecca of many a joyous and boyish pilgrimage of my own. A more delightful spot could not have been found anywhere. No description, however eloquent or graphic, could convey an adequate idea of its peaceful loveliness. Seven springs, bubbling up by the roadside, sent their pure and sparkling waters meandering through the undergrowth of a glorious wood. Near at hand was a charming dell or glen, called by the country folks Hartley Bottom, but christened in one of Charles Knight's publications the Velvet Valley. Nothing sweeter or more exquisite have I ever seen. The sward was softer even than velvet, while the trees and bushes which bordered its sloping banks made the whole place a dream of rural beauty. Hartley Bottom was open to the public in those early days. Anybody could wander through it on the way back over the hills to the town. A few years later, when, grown to man's estate, I visited the locality again, I was vexed to observe that a huge barrier was set up against the

entrance, that trespassers were threatened with the "utmost rigour of the law," and that a veritable earthly paradise was closed to all but the proprietor and his gamekeeper. After the lapse of further years, I was still more vexed to learn that the landowner, annoyed at the popularity of his own lovely domain, had effectually destroyed the beauty of the Seven Springs themselves. Between the springs and the woods through which their limpid waters flowed he had erected an ugly stone wall! I have never visited the place since. The contrast between what I remembered and what I should have seen would have made me sad or—mad.

I have mentioned Leckhampton, and I have mentioned Macready. A brother of the tragedian, Major Macready, lies buried in the village churchyard. Attaching to the circumstance is a melancholy story. The widow of the officer adorned the grave with the choicest flowers, and made for herself a bower among them. There for years afterwards the poor lady used to spend long and frequent hours in fancied communings with the dead. The kindly villagers, sympathising with her distress, thoughtfully abstained from disturbing her sorrowful meditations. To this day the grave of Major Macready is an object of interest to visitors to the village of Leckhampton.

CHAPTER II

THE CLOSE SEASON

THE power of the Church was probably never more remarkably demonstrated anywhere than it was in Cheltenham during many years of the middle of the nineteenth century. As a matter of fact, the history of the town for all that period was the history of a single clergyman. The dominant authority in secular as well as religious affairs was a notable and imperious divine—the Rev. Francis Close, afterwards Dean of Carlisle.

The reign of the Rev. Francis—what may be called the Close Season—extended from 1826, when he was appointed to the Incumbency of Cheltenham, to 1856, the year in which he accepted the Deanery of Carlisle. During all these years, his presence so pervaded and his influence so dominated the town that little or nothing could be done there without his sanction. My recollection of him is still vivid. A singularly handsome man, he was adored by the ladies of the town, especially

the fashionable ladies, matrons and maidens alike. The adoration, as is usual in such cases, took the form of slippers. It was stated at the time he transferred his labours to Carlisle that over 1,500 pairs of these articles, worked and embroidered by the hands of his fair adorers, were presented to Mr. Close in the course of his ministry at Cheltenham. Some of the more enraptured or more facetious of his admirers spoke of his fresh and comely countenance as "the beauty of holiness."[1] When he died in 1882, one of his contemporary biographers, writing of the earlier period of his life, described him as "the Pope of Cheltenham, with pontifical prerogatives from which the temporal had not been severed."

The description was not inaccurate, nor much exaggerated. The annual races or steeplechases on Cleeve Hill, far away from the town, were discontinued, and only fitfully resumed nearer at hand afterwards, owing to the incumbent's overpowering influence. But the most remarkable example of his authority in secular affairs was the power he exercised in preventing the reconstruction of the theatre. Cheltenham had held an honourable place in the history of the drama. It was there

[1] The Archbishop of Armagh (Lord John George Beresford) was also called "the beauty of holiness."

that Mrs. Siddons appeared with a company of barn-stormers. The home of the drama was at that time situated in an obscure court. The tiring room was a hay-loft and the arena a stable. A party of titled people, among them the Earl of Ailesbury, thinking to get some diversion from the performance of "Venice Preserved," paid the place a visit. They went to laugh, but remained to cry. So powerfully had Mrs. Siddons acted the part of Belvidera that the ladies of the party were unpresentable next morning, owing, as Lord Ailesbury informed her husband, to their having wept so excessively the previous night. The report of the Ailesbury family induced Garrick to send an agent to Cheltenham with the offer of an engagement to the young actress. Thus did Sarah Siddons begin her triumphant career on the greater stage. The story is told at length in the poet Campbell's life of the illustrious mummer. Years afterwards a handsome theatre was built in the town. Lord Byron, at one time a resident, lent his aid in bringing down talent. All the great exponents of tragedy and comedy—Kemble and Kean, Macready and Anderson, Liston and Munden, Bannister and Grimaldi, Miss Mellon and Mrs. Jordan—strutted and mimed before succeeding audiences of fashion. But a great calamity befell the drama in 1839.

The Theatre Royal, shortly after James Anderson had fulfilled an engagement in it, was totally destroyed by fire. I am not sure that the clergy of the period did not regard the occurrence as a manifestation of the anger of heaven. It is certain that the incumbent preached against the stage, published the sermon that he preached, and otherwise brought such pressure to bear on the community that no regular theatre was established while he held dominion over the town.

Many other evidences of narrow-mindedness were furnished by Mr. Close during the time that he was spiritual (and to a large extent temporal) master of the town. Some of these evidences may be found in the varied volumes of sermons, as well as the printed lectures and addresses, that were so highly treasured by his followers. When civil marriages were legalised in 1840, he stated from the pulpit that "he wished the canon law allowed him to refuse the sacrament to all persons married at the Registrar's Office." When infant baptism or some such subject was a burning question in the Church, he was credited with the declaration of his belief in the hyper-Calvinistic assumption that "there are infants in hell a span long." It was his custom for many years to preach a special sermon against the Roman Catholics on the re-

currence of the 5th of November. Catholics and Unitarians were alike outside his pale; for all denominations save these were invited by him and his friends to join them when a Scripture Readers' Society was formed in Cheltenham. Mr. Close was perhaps a little superstitious too. Writing in a private letter about his relations with the Bishop of Gloucester, he said:—"Old Monk and I were very good friends. He never interfered with me in any one thing that I can remember. We had some difficulty about a special fast-day on occasion of the cholera. But he let me do what I pleased. And we held it—a wonderful day—and the cholera never visited Cheltenham, although it was all round us within four miles.

The worst instance of his bigotry was the part he was understood to have played in the prosecution of the now venerable George Jacob Holyoake. Mr. Holyoake was one of Robert Owen's social missionaries. In that capacity he came in 1842 to lecture to the Cheltenham folks. I was a boy of ten at the time. Hearing my elders talk of the new and strange doctrines that were being preached, I found myself in a meeting in the long room of the King's Head Inn—a room in the inn yard used for the annual dinners of Oddfellows and similar feasts and ceremonies. The lecturer was a young

man, tall and slim, with dark hair and a thin, falsetto voice. I don't know whether my good friend will recognise the portrait; but it is my earliest recollection of him. What he said I can't in the least remember. Mr. Holyoake, paying a later visit to Cheltenham, lectured on "Home Colonization." After the lecture, in reply to a question, he made some remarks on the subject of religion which, though they would excite little notice now, at that time and in that town naturally aroused hostile attention. The *Cheltenham Chronicle* sounded the alarm. It published a paragraph in which Mr. Holyoake was called a "poor misguided wretch," and the audience was roundly abused for "applauding the miscreant," the editor appending a note to the effect that three persons in the employ of the office were ready to give evidence in case the authorities should institute a prosecution for blasphemy. One of these three persons was a man whom I came to know afterwards—a printer and local preacher of the name of Bartram, gifted with religious fervour, and not ungifted with a certain sort of eloquence. It was he, I believe, who wrote or suggested the incriminating paragraph. The authorities took the advice of the newspaper; Mr. Holyoake was prosecuted for blasphemy; and the result of the "last trial for Atheism," as he himself

calls it, was six months' imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol. The prime mover in the proceedings was generally believed to be the Rev. Francis Close, who was for this or other reasons dubbed by Charles Southwell the "March-hare of the Church."

But Mr. Close, as was said at the time of his death, must be credited with eminent qualities to have founded so supreme and inquisitorial an empire over home and will as that which he established in Cheltenham. There can be no doubt of his energy and ardour. If ever there was a devoted Churchman, it was the incumbent of the parish of Cheltenham. Foremost in all "good works," he was instrumental in the erection of no fewer than eight new churches, while many charitable and educational institutions enjoyed the benefit of his support, some of them even owing their initiation to his commanding zeal. A commodious hospital was erected during his ministry. So also were the Cheltenham College[1] (now hardly second to Eton or Harrow or Rugby), the Ladies' College (commenced in a private house when I was a boy), and the Normal Training College for Teachers, of which

[1] Mr. Douglas Sladen, writing in *Harper's Magazine*, records the fact that the names of the foremost representatives of the college in sports and athletics are inscribed on the walls of the gymnasium. Thus we are reminded that the William Conyngham Plunket, who was a silver medallist in 1845, became Archbishop

the Rev. C. H. Bromby, afterwards Bishop of Tasmania, was made the first headmaster. Works of this kind ought properly to be placed to the credit of the distinguished Churchman. Nor was he, notwithstanding his serious and severe reputation, destitute of humour ; for I recollect when he paid one of his frequent visits to the printing office in which I was engaged, and in which his occasional sermons and lectures were printed, how heartily he laughed as he told the old story of the Jew clothesman who, when asked why he called out "O' clo', o' clo," instead of "Old clothes, old clothes," replied that his interrogator would be glad to cut the cry short too if he had to shout it through the streets all day long.

Among the new churches built in Mr. Close's time was Christ Church, on Bay's Hill, right away in the fields, with scarcely a house beyond it. Near at hand were clay ponds made by the brickmakers, where the boys of the lower part of the town (myself included) for want of a better place used to bathe among newts and frogs and slime. The first incumbent of Christ Church was an eloquent

of Dublin, the Right Hon. Lord Plunket; that R. T. Reid, who figures as a scholar of the college, is now Sir R. T. Reid, K.C., member for the Dumfries Burghs; and that Mr. John Morley, member for Montrose, and Mr. R. E. Francillon, the novelist, have also left their names on the college walls.

Irishman, who attracted crowded congregations to the new temple every Sunday—the Rev. Archibald Boyd. In pursuance of a half-fulfilled resolution to hear all the parsons in the town, I sometimes joined the congregations myself. Years afterwards, passing through Exeter, I attended service in the grand old cathedral. The edifice was crowded—so crowded that in the seat I occupied I could hear, but not see, the preacher. The sermon was a bitter denunciation of Mr. Bradlaugh, then engaged in his great struggle with the House of Commons. Some of the old fables about him were retailed from the pulpit. These being communicated to Mr. Bradlaugh, he contradicted them in his newspaper for the hundredth time. The preacher was my old acquaintance of Christ Church, then Dean of Exeter. Eloquence seems to be an endowment of the Boyd family, since among others who are distinguished for the gift is a nephew of the Dean of Exeter's, the Right Rev. William Boyd-Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon.

The curate of Christ Church in my time became afterwards even more celebrated than Archibald Boyd. This was the Rev. Frederick William Robertson—"Robertson of Brighton." One used to hear much in those days among the townsfolk about Captain Robertson, the father of the young

preacher; a little, but very little, about his son, the curate; but a great deal too much about a rather harum-scarum brother of the curate's. It was only after he had obtained a living at Brighton that Robertson became famous. But he had literary tastes and longings even in Cheltenham. Tennyson was residing in the town at the time, and Robertson seems to have paid him a visit. The poet was not a man, either then or afterwards, but especially then, to welcome casual acquaintances. So, according to Mr. Knowles, fearing that his visitor was going to "pluck out the heart of his mystery," he talked to him about nothing but beer.[1] If they ever met afterwards, when both had become famous, we may be sure that they would have talked about something else. Robertson died young, but not before it had been demonstrated that he was one of the choicest products of the English Church. Dean Stanley called him "the greatest preacher of the century." When he died, he had published nothing but one sermon, two lectures, two addresses, and an analysis of "In Memoriam." But he had not

[1] Hallam, Lord Tennyson, refers to this incident in the "Life of the Poet Laureate":—"My father would say: 'The first time I met Robertson I felt that he expected something notable from me, because I knew that he admired my poems, that he wished to pluck the heart from my mystery: so for the life of me from pure nervousness I could talk of nothing but beer.'"

been long dead before there arose an imperious demand for all he had said or written. No sermons have had so large a circulation as Robertson's; none have been so widely read, so warmly praised, so highly appreciated—not even Channing's, or Theodore Parker's, or Ralph Waldo Emerson's. Mudie found them as popular as novels, Tauchnitz added them to his foreign series, and at least one volume has been translated into German and another into Scandinavian. Within a brief period of the death of the author, says the Rev. Stopford Brooke in his biography of Robertson, fifteen editions of the first volume were published, thirteen of the second, and thirteen of the third. Even in America nine editions had been issued at the same period. Beyond question the fame of few preachers will live longer in literary history than that of the curate of Christ Church on Bay's Hill.

CHAPTER III

SOME CELEBRITIES AND OTHERS

ALFRED TENNYSON, the greatest poet of the century, was always a good deal of a recluse. It was his habit to shun the "madding crowd." Solitude and seclusion had more attraction for him than all the gaiety and glamour of what is called society.[1] This was certainly the case during the five years or so that he was often with his mother in Cheltenham. The period was the late forties. One used to hear of him as a sort of myth or shadow—the young poet whose books were in the booksellers' windows, and whose name was beginning to sound as familiar as that of Byron or Wordsworth. Frederick Robertson speaks of meeting him at the house of a physician; Sydney Dobell had a long walk with him and Carlyle at Malvern; other residents remember how he played

[1] It was in Cheltenham, I think, that an acquaintance would keep on assuring the poet that it was the greatest honour of his life to have met him. Tennyson's answer was—"Don't talk d——d nonsense.

in a game of blind man's buff at a Christmas party in 1848.[1] Beyond this little was known at the time, and not much more is known now, of the poet's life in Cheltenham. It is said that he was fond of taking his walks in Jessop's Gardens. Jessop[2] was a nurseryman, and his gardens covered a good many acres of ground. The gardens were pleasant and picturesque, and the little River Chelt flowed through them. But even in Tennyson's day they had begun to be despoiled; for the Great Western Railway set up a station therein.

"In Memoriam," the loveliest tribute any poet ever paid to a friend's memory, must have been written in Cheltenham. It was published in 1850, the last year of Tennyson's residence there. One can summon to the vision the scenery of the Cotswolds—the "high, wild hills, and rough, uneven ways" of Shakspeare—as one reads these stanzas:—

> Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
> And on these dews that drench the furze,
> And all the silver gossamers
> That twinkle into green and gold:

[1] Tennyson writes from Cheltenham in 1845 to his friend Rawnsley:—"Here is a handsome town of thirty-five thousand inhabitants, a polka-parson-worshipping place, of which the Rev. Francis Close is Pope, besides pumps and pump-rooms, chalybeates, quadrilles, and one of the prettiest countries in Great Britain."

[2] G. L. Jessop, the famous cricketer, is, I believe, a grandson or great-grandson of the old nurseryman.

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main.

The poet describes how he climbed the eminence and found in the landscape beneath no feature that did not breathe some memory of his friend :—

Nor hoary knoll of ash and haw
That hears the latest linnet trill,
Nor quarry trench'd along the hill
And haunted by the wrangling daw.

The quarries "trench'd along the hill" were happy hunting-grounds of local geologists. One of these—an eminent physician in the town, Thomas Wright, M.D.—had, in lectures at the Philosophical Institution and elsewhere, explained from the evidences he had gathered on Leckhampton Hill that the Severn Valley and even the Cotswolds themselves lay once in the bed of the ocean. Adding now the fact that Cheltenham, with its two miles of High Street, is built upon sand deposited by the sea which in distant ages spread over vale and wold, we can understand the perfect beauty and accuracy of these lines:—

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth! what changes hast thou seen!
There, where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

The year in which "In Memoriam" was

published was also the year in which another poem first claimed attention. This other poem was "The Roman," originally purporting to be the work of one Sydney Yendys. It was soon known to be the production of Sydney Dobell, the son of a Cheltenham wine merchant. George Gilfillan, who assumed at the time a sort of protectorate over new poets, described it with equal extravagance and enthusiasm as a "conflagration of genius." I and other young men in Cheltenham were all the more interested in "The Roman," because it had been inspired by the revolutionary ferment of the period, and had for its object the awakening of sympathy for the struggling patriots of Italy.

The Dobells were well known—at least by sight and name. I used to see some of them almost every day on the way to or from the counting-house and emporium of the firm. As a family, they kept themselves almost entirely to themselves. It may be said that they were more exclusive than Tennyson himself. There were balls and parties in the town; but they attended none of them. There were famous visitors to the town, as Sir Harry Smith or Sir Charles Napier; but they saw none of them. There were great political contests in the town, as between the Berkeleys and the Agg-Gardners; but they stood entirely aloof

from them. The elder Dobell, married to a daughter of the founder of a church which claimed to be based on the primitive Christian model, was an old-fashioned merchant, much after the style one imagines Mr. Ruskin's father to have been. Connected with the Dobell establishments there were no outward attractions, no glaring lights, no flaring interiors, no insinuating barmaids. Even about the advertisements of the house there was an air of dignity and superiority which no other tradesman assumed. It was always "Mr. Dobell" who had this or that vintage, or this or that brew, to offer to the nobility and gentry. The religious tenets of the family seem to have been responsible for the peculiar mystery in which all the members of it enshrouded themselves. When Sydney married and brought home his bride, society people made the usual society calls, but were politely informed that mixing with the world was contrary to the strict requirements of the faith in which he had been nurtured!

The poet, the better to ensure the quietude and retirement his church enjoined and his own habits and studies dictated, pitched his tent in some of the isolated places of the neighbourhood. One of these was the village of Hucclecote, situated on the old Roman Road three or four miles from

Gloucester. It was here that he commenced "The Roman." But Hucclecote is the *locale* of an anecdote which is perhaps even better known in Gloucestershire than the poem. Near at hand is Churchdown, shortened by common usage into Chosen. Chosen Church stands on an isolated hill that commands so beautiful a prospect of field and wood, hamlet and town, for miles around, that it is a favourite resort of summer holiday-makers. To account for the situation of the sacred edifice, which necessitates a toilsome climb for the worshippers, the usual legend of impish intervention was invented. It was built in the vale, but was removed to the hill-top by the devil himself! But to the story. One Sunday the clergyman or clerk officiating in the parish of Hucclecote was making much of the appeal to the Lord—"And make Thy chosen people joyful." The appeal on this occasion was uttered with so much emphasis that a villager in the congregation, unable to stand what he thought was the marked preference for the residents of another parish, cried out aloud, "What have the Hucclecut folks done, then?"

Other members of the Dobell family have made their mark in literature. One of these is Dr. Horace Dobell, the author of many treatises on medical subjects, particularly an elaborate ex-

position of the salubrious qualities of Bournemouth, where for many years he was one of the leading physicians. If Dr. Horace was not a poet himself, his wife at any rate laid claim to the title; for she published one volume of poetical effusions and announced that seventeen more were to follow!

As there were brave men before Agamemnon, so there were poets connected with Cheltenham before the Dobells. Thomas Haynes Bayly, the author of an endless number of songs that everybody knew and sung in the earlier years of the century, lived and died in the town. Old people will have a lively recollection of the popularity of such sentimental ditties as these—"She Wore a Wreath of Roses," "I'd be a Butterfly," and "Woodman, Spare that Tree." The inscription on a mural tablet to Bayly's memory in one of the churches was written by Theodore Hook. A later poet records in verse how he shed a tear over a brother poet's grave. This later poet was L. M. Thornton, author of the once familiar song, "The Postman's Knock," which was set to music by W. T. Wrightson. I knew poor Thornton passing well. The American humourist's definition of a poet as "a man who wears long hair and can't eat his vittles" would have suited him exactly. He hawked his own volumes, and, it was said, borrowed them and

sold them again. It was a sad blow to the poet when a prosperous tailor of my acquaintance declined to part with the book he had purchased except on condition that the purchase money was refunded. Sad, too, was the poet's end, for he died in Bath workhouse after having been an inmate for many years.

A lady of some distinction in letters played a rather prominent part in one of the elections for Cheltenham. Daughter of the Earl of Lindsay, she married first Sir John Guest, the wealthy iron-master of Dowlais, who died in 1852. While she was Lady Charlotte Guest, she published two works of a totally different character—one a translation from the French of a treatise on the use of hot air in the manufacture of iron, the other a translation of fairy tales from a Welsh manuscript in the library of Jesus College, Oxford. Two years after she became a widow her portrait was painted by Mr. G. F. Watts. Next year, though she was forty-five and the mother of ten children, she was wooed and won by a young clergyman of less than thirty, the Rev. Charles Schreiber, son of an army officer well known in fashionable circles. Mr. Schreiber soon developed a desire to enter politics. Lady Charlotte was a mighty help in his contests for Cheltenham, which constituency and Poole he

successively represented in Parliament. One of Lady Charlotte's daughters became the wife of Sir Austen Henry Layard, the explorer of Nineveh, and the British Ambassador at Constantinople during the troublous and critical period from 1877 to 1880. Mr. Schreiber and Lady Charlotte had tastes in common. Both were fond of collecting curious and out-of-the-way articles. The English part of a choice collection of porcelain, enamels, and ceramics, was, on Mr. Schreiber's death, presented to the South Kensington Museum. Another collection of the lady's—English fans of the eighteenth century—is now in the British Museum. Lady Charlotte continued the pursuit of her varied hobbies till she was considerably past her eightieth year. Nothing came amiss to this industrious antiquary. Glass and needlework and playing cards were in her line. She even collected and classified buttons! But enamels and fans, playing cards and buttons, are a long way from the Cheltenham election of 1859, which was the only reason for introducing Lady Charlotte Schreiber to the reader of these memoirs.

CHAPTER IV

HEROINES OF HUMBLE LIFE

NOBODY will be in the least interested in the writer's ancestry. Nor, to tell the truth, is he much interested himself—not because he couldn't rise to the occasion, but because there is nothing to be interested about. As far as I can learn, the only member of the family that ever did anything remarkable was a nephew of my grandmother's! It is true that one John Adams is reported in the *Newgate Calendar* to have been hanged for highway robbery; but I hardly think that he was any connection of ours—at all events I have never tried to establish the relationship. It is true, also, that another John Adams was President of the United States—no connection of ours either, though of course it would have been easy enough for a professional genealogist to trace a distant alliance. Pride of ancestry is not a failing or a fad of mine—for the reason, probably, that I can go

back no further than two generations, and that only on one side.

We were poor but honest folks of Gloucestershire. It is necessary to make this statement, because otherwise, being poor, it might be inferred that we were not honest. A similar reason no doubt prompts a similar statement in all cases where people of humble origin are concerned: for the world at large seems incapable of associating poverty with even the negative virtues. We also, in the words of another old formula, did our duty in that state of life unto which it had pleased God to call us. I cannot find, after diligent inquiry, that any of us have ever been known to the police, not to speak of His Majesty's judges. Here at any rate we may claim some superiority over many aristocratic families. For these and all other mercies, as pious Scotch people say, the Lord be thankit.

My grandfather—he bore the name of William Wells—was a very old man when I was born. The only thing I remember about him was his shrewdness in telling me not to do a thing when he wanted me to do it—to bring him his walking-stick, for instance. My grandmother was a dear old dame, whose chief consolations in her last days were a pinch of snuff and half a glass of gin before

bedtime. At that period the snuff-box was always in her hand, but the glass was never seen except late in the evening. Anne Morris, to give her her maiden name, had a couple of personal peculiarities: she had only one leg, but, to make up for it, two eyes of different colours—one hazel, the other blue. The leg which she had not had been lost in a Worcestershire nail factory, where she had been employed as a girl, and where the constant standing on a damp floor had induced a disease that necessitated amputation. I well remember another feature too—the hard and unsightly corns on the old lady's knuckles, which were almost as large as the knuckles themselves. When she was left with a family of five girls, she and they set up a laundry—not a laundry in the modern, but in the ancient acceptation of the term. The corns were the result of the hard scrubbing and rubbing she used to bestow on the shirts and skirts of her patrons. It came to pass in her closing days, when her daughters, having embarked on other enterprises, were able to relieve her of the drudgery of the washtub, that her hands became as white and soft as a baby's. If my good old grand-dam had aught that could be described as a fault, it was that she too often saved her graceless grandson from the consequences of his escapades.

Concerning this laundry business, allusion to it would not have been introduced if there hadn't been a lesson to be drawn. It was an honest occupation—as honest, say, as stock-jobbing. There was nothing in the whole episode of which any mortal need be ashamed. Yet dainty people would perhaps consider that it was a fact to be concealed. Let us understand each other. Work of any sort is honourable. It is idleness, and especially that form of idleness which is called loafing, that is disgraceful. Dickens never appeared to me so snobbish and contemptible as when he whined and whimpered about the degradation of having as a boy to earn a few shillings a week by pasting labels on blacking bottles. The thing is, however, not only to work, but to work well—to put the best that is in us into everything we do. Theodore Parker in one of his powerful sermons tells us that Michael sweeping round a lamp-post or Bridget sweeping out a kitchen, assuming that the work is honestly done, is as meritorious as Paul preaching on Mars' Hill. "Work is worship." Honesty in work as in all things else. The same doctrine is taught by Emerson, Carlyle, Ruskin, and every great thinker who has expatiated on the subject. "All service ranks the same with God," writes Browning, whose ancestor was a footman. Well, the humble

and industrious women who laboured amidst suds and steam carried into practice the precepts of the philosophers. The washtub and the mangle were dignified by what they did with them. As Cromwell's Ironsides put a conscience into marching and fighting, so did these poor women put a conscience into scrubbing and ironing. None of the gentry for whom they worked ever had reason to complain that their cuffs and collars, their flounces and their furbelows, were not returned without a sign of previous wear. Thus did widow and orphans earn the title to a place beside Paul on Mars' Hill. Mr. Ruskin proudly described his father as "an entirely honest merchant." I say as proudly of my grandmother that she was "an entirely honest washerwoman."

Of Anne Wells's daughters two only married—the eldest and the youngest. My mother was the eldest. She married a plasterer—one John Adams. My mother was a saint—not in piety, for she professed no particular faith, but in character and disposition. No tenderer or sweeter woman ever lived. I cherish her memory as that of one of the salt of the earth. The affection she bestowed on her children is delightful to remember. She worked for them, slaved for them, suffered for them. If she had affections, she had also intellect.

Had she been born in less humble circumstances, with corresponding educational advantages, she would, as her letters testify, have been as accomplished as any lady in the land. She had courage against the world, too, this heroine of the poor. When, at a melancholy period of her career, she was driven to such straits that she had to persuade herself and her children that they were drinking coffee when the decoction was nothing but hot water poured on burnt crusts of bread, she never lost heart. Nor did she lose heart when, failing with all her industry to keep the wolf from the fold, she set out with four young children on a three days' journey in a waggon for London to search the great wilderness for her husband. A hard and laborious life in Cheltenham was followed by a hard and laborious life in London; but Sarah Adams bore both with the patience and resignation of a martyr, never whining or complaining, but always doing her best to turn an honest penny at the old calling. It was an intense delight to me years after, when I paid my first visit to London at the time of the Great Exhibition—for I had been left behind with my grandmother and aunts in Cheltenham—it was an intense delight to me to hear strangers address my mother as "Miss," and mistake her and her son for sweethearts.

John Adams, as will be inferred from what has already been said, was a bit of a wanderer. Even after he was married, he wandered to such widely separated places as Droitwich, Leamington, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Gosport, and London, working at his trade the while. My very earliest recollection is of being carried on his back along the banks of a river or canal somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bromsgrove. As there were few railways in those days, wandering was a more tiresome business than it is now. But John Adams was a good workman. He used to point to a certain groined ceiling which he had completed in a private residence as the best bit of plastering in Cheltenham. Pride in his work was his weak point—if pride of that sort can be considered a weak point. It got him into many a squabble and scrape. Being somewhat quarrelsome in his cups, he would challenge anybody in the same trade to surpass his performance with the trowel—a challenge that was issued in so boastful a way that it generally ended in a fierce dispute. But my father, small as he was in stature, had the courage of his convictions : so it was that he found himself in more clashes and scraps than was pleasant for either himself or his family. His pugnacity, however, was not, like that of many cowardly men, reserved for home consumption. Except for the

failings I have indicated, one of which at least leant to virtue's side, he was not a bad father or a bad husband. In his later years he was a great sufferer. And then it was that the heroism of my mother was shown again—such heroism as is, perhaps, shown only in the ranks of the poor and lowly.

I have mentioned that my grandmother's nephew was the only member of our family that had achieved distinction. His name was George Morris. I used to hear of him as connected in some undefined way with an insurance society in London. Little else was known, for never a letter came from him. What did come for years and years, as regularly as the week came round, was a weekly newspaper addressed to my grandmother—first the *Weekly Dispatch* and then the *Examiner*. The *Dispatch* was at that time the leading exponent of Radical ideas. It was, I think, still owned by Alderman Harmer, still numbered Eliza Cook among its contributors, still contained the stirring political letters of Caustic and Publicola—the latter supposed to be the production of W. J. Fox, the "Norwich Weaver Boy," afterwards member for Oldham, and one of the most notable of the Anti-Corn Law orators. The substitution of the *Examiner* for the *Dispatch* was not appreciated by the family; but

we could not look a gift horse in the mouth, and, besides, we had no means of communicating with the giver. The *Examiner*, however, was a famous literary paper—Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*—then edited by John Forster, the "Gentleman John" of Newcastle, the "harbitrary gent" of the London cabman, the friend and biographer of Charles Dickens. Walter Savage Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" were then appearing in its columns, besides much else of a high literary value. I revelled as a boy in the politics of the *Dispatch*—as a youth in the criticisms of the *Examiner*. Many years later, when, at the end of a curious and disastrous experience with insurance societies, I took out a new policy in the National Provident Institution, I learnt that George Morris, the predecessor of Samuel Smiles[1] in the same office, had long been the secretary of that society. My grandmother's nephew was so highly appreciated that the directors voted him a handsome pension on his retirement, and even granted an annuity to his widow. George Morris's remote connection with our family does not deprive us of the right to claim that the insurance secretary was a credit to it.

[1] Samuel Smiles, now more than ninety years old, is, of course, the author of "Self-Help" and many other well-known books.

My aunts were all estimable people too. Just, upright, honourable, considerate, thoughtful, industrious, they had all the best virtues. I was scarcely more than an infant when I was fetched from Droitwich on a stage coach to live under their roof for upwards of twenty years. The little imp who was thus introduced into the household was often a sad trouble to them, as may perhaps be shown later. When laundry work declined, they established a small trading concern—cultivating musk plants, and selling them ; buying butter and crockery and odds and ends of all sorts, and retailing them at honest prices. The principles that had governed them at the washing tub governed them behind the counter. So at last by industry and frugality they acquired enough for their modest wants in a cottage. There they died one after the other at an advanced age, respected by all who knew them, and leaving behind a stainless and honoured name. It should be said also that they had minds of their own and capacity to exercise them, as we shall see when I come to write of certain public movements of their time. One of the sisters, who had gone forth into the world, while in service in Brighton, was a regular attendant at Trinity Chapel. It was from her that I heard of the wonderful sermons of Frederick William Robertson,

long before the fame of his eloquence and of the beauty of his discourses had spread over the land. Proud indeed might any man feel of humble kindred such as mine.

CHAPTER V

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

IT is one of the commonplaces of conversation that the century which has lately closed has witnessed greater progress effected in all branches of human knowledge and activity, and indeed in all the affairs of human life, than all previous centuries put together. The statement may be said to be quite true in some things, partly true in most things, but not true in all things. We are wiser than the ancients, but not more virtuous. We know more, but we do not think more. Our dominion over the physical world is wider and more complete than ever before ; but our dominion over the intellectual world is still as circumscribed as in the great days of Greece and Rome. Poets like Homer and philosophers like Plato are at least the equal of any poets and philosophers of a later time. But the progress we have in mind is the progress we see in the condition of society, the privileges enjoyed by the people, the application

of science to industry, the discoveries and inventions in relief of labour. So far as mere comfort goes there is absolutely no comparison between the state of the humbler classes now and that of the same classes in my young days. I am speaking, of course, of the honest and industrious poor, not of the thriftless, the idle, or the evil-disposed. Some few of the changes that I have myself seen will answer the purpose of comparison.

Take, to begin with, the commonest of conveniences—matches. These little articles are cheap enough now. It was otherwise "when we were boys together." Matches, as we know them, were then unknown. If you wanted to strike a light, you had to make elaborate preparations to accomplish that end. A flake of flint, a strip of steel, and a box of tinder were all necessary before the brimstone sticks of the period could be ignited. Tinder was made by burning old rags, placing them half-consumed in a metal box, and pressing them tightly down with a metal lid. Then, with the steel held in one hand and the flint in the other, sparks had to be struck from them in such a way that they would fall on the tinder and ignite it. The application of a sulphur-tipped stick to the smouldering fire in the tinder-box produced the required flame. The process is easy enough to describe,

but was not so easy to put in operation. It was often my duty in the old days, on early mornings, to strike a light with the aid of the clumsy implements just mentioned. And a dismal duty it was, especially before daybreak in frosty weather; for one often skinned one's shins in groping for the materials, and then skinned one's knuckles in using them. Moreover, if the tinder was either damp or exhausted by previous usage, it was impossible to get a light at all. But a better time for poor folks came when John Walker, the Stockton chemist, invented his friction matches. Great was the wonderment, I recollect, when they were introduced. Of course, they were poor things compared with the articles which are now supplied at a marvellously cheap rate. The earliest form of the lucifer match, as it was called, was a little strip of wood (dipped in a chemical substance) which had to be drawn swiftly through a strip of doubled sandpaper. Small as his invention was, John Walker was one of the greatest benefactors of his time.

The light of other days was hardly more deserving of praise than the method of procuring it. Tallow candles were the illuminants of the poor—rushlights, long sixes, short sixes, and so forth—sold in bundles at so many to the pound. The wicks

that were made of cotton required constant snuffing: hence snuffers and snuffer-trays, now as little known as tinder-boxes, were indispensable appurtenances to every polite household. Wax candles, which did not require snuffing, were the luxuries of the gentry, who alone could afford them. The light shed by the common illuminant was so feeble and dismal that it did scarcely more than make darkness visible. It was almost as well that the general body of the people could not then read; for persistent efforts to turn the advantage to account after sunset would most certainly have ruined half the eyes of the country. The candle factories—there was one in the very centre of our town—emitted, during certain parts of the process of manufacture, the most pungent and sickening stenches. Gas was a great improvement on candles—not, however, in the odours which issued from the works in the early stages of the novelty. When our streets were first lighted with gas, the lamp-lighters, like the new police, wore a special uniform. With white jackets and glazed hats, each shouldering a ladder, they marched up the middle of the main street together before branching off to their respective districts. The procession was not ineffective; but both it and the ladders have long since been discontinued as unnecessary.

Perhaps it is in respect to modes and facilities of locomotion that poor and rich alike have been most benefited. If the poor rode at all in pre-railway times, they had to ride in waggons, living and sleeping in them for days and nights even on comparatively short journeys. I remember them well, those great lumbering waggons, as big as haystacks, covered with tarpaulin, the wheels broad enough in the tyre to span a ditch, the six or eight horses apparently strong enough to move a mountain. Coaches were for those who could afford a more rapid transit. Between 1824 and 1839, which has been called the heyday of coaching, the High Street of Cheltenham presented as cheerful and picturesque a sight as could be seen anywhere. As many as thirty or forty coaches, chiefly four-in-hands, passed through it every day. The dashing steeds, the fanfaronades on the horn, the scarlet coats of the coachman and the guard, all combined to make the spectacle impressive and exhilarating. The ride, too, in warm, sunny weather, when the country looked its best, was intensely enjoyable. Two such rides are not likely to be effaced from my memory —one to Malvern, the other over the Cotswolds to Oxford. But in bad weather, at night, in storm, temperature below freezing-point, heaven help the unhappy passengers! The circumstances of the

"insides," packed like herrings in a barrel, breathing the same air from the time they started till the time they stopped to change horses, was bad enough. Far worse, however, were the circumstances of the "outsides," perched on high without shelter of any sort, saturated by the rain or frozen by the cold. No wonder men made their wills before going long journeys in early days, for the risks of the road must have been at least as imminent from storm and snow as from bold highwaymen.

Railways superseded coaches, though it was not till the end of 1861 that the last of the highfliers between Cheltenham and Oxford—"Glover's Oxford Mail"—was driven off the road; but the new mode of locomotion did not all at once, as we shall see presently, greatly improve the conditions of travelling for the poor. The West of England was much behind the North in adopting the new system. And when it did, it made the mistake of laying down two gauges—the broad and the narrow. The Battle of the Gauges, begun in the thirties, was not finally and absolutely closed till the nineties. The Great Western line from Paddington to Plymouth was constructed on Brunel's plan; but the lines in all the rest of the kingdom were constructed on Stephenson's. It was a pity that the rivalries of companies and engineers did not permit of the

choice, at the beginning of the locomotive era, of a gauge that would probably have been better than either the broad or the narrow. For many years a little stretch of line between Cheltenham and Gloucester was a sort of railway curiosity, for thereon trains belonging to both gauges were run till within very recent times. But the broad gauge had ultimately to succumb to the narrow. The revolution was effected at enormous cost to the Great Western Company. It was announced in the month of May, 1892, that the last of the broad gauge had disappeared, and that consequently there was then for the first time uniformity throughout the whole of our railway system.

When the Bristol and Birmingham Line (now part of the great Midland system) was opened in 1840, it was one day announced that a free trip to Bromsgrove would be offered to the inhabitants of Cheltenham. Great was the excitement among old and young. Along with a number of other lads I was anxious to share in the promised treat. Accordingly we assembled at a level crossing near the town (the station was, and is yet, about two miles away, nobody at the time the line was made wishing it nearer) in the expectation that passengers would be taken up there. Disappointment was general when the train was seen to steam past us.

But we were fortunate after all; for many of the excursionists were left behind at Bromsgrove, thence to make their way home as best they could. The free trip was probably designed to remove the prejudices of the people. These prejudices were so great, especially among elder folks, that my dear old grandmother could never be persuaded to enter a railway carriage, and the dislike to the innovation extended even to some of her children. The distrust would perhaps have been justified if all passengers had been treated like a certain old lady in the North, who was pitched from the train in a collision, and who, when asked how she liked the new mode, replied that the riding was "no se bad," but that they had "a varry unsarimonious way o' pitting ye oot!"

The evolution of the railway carriage is interesting. The earliest of these conveyances was a mere truck, without seats and without cover. If you wanted to sit down on the journey, you had to provide yourself with a box or a basket; if you wanted to look at the country, you had to stand on tiptoe; if you wanted protection from the rain, you had to carry an umbrella! And this primitive accommodation was for years the only provision for the third-class traveller. Even as late as 1855 I rode from Manchester to Stockport in a coverless

carriage. One of the first improvements on some of the lines was a kind of horse-box with seats and cover, but with shutters instead of windows. Of course, there were no lamps in these so-called carriages. Day and night at all seasons you had to sit in utter darkness if you did not care to run the risk of catching a chill. My first and last journey in a horse-box arrangement was between London and Brighton in the year 1862. Lords and ladies who wished to travel in comfort in the early days of the railway rode in their family coaches, which were fixed and wedged on the company's trucks. Old folks who now travel in third-class carriages with all the speed and in nearly all the luxury of first-class passengers will readily admit that progress—real progress—has been nowhere more marked than on the railway.

Real progress has been accomplished in many other directions also. I am not wrong in saying, I believe, that people who have been born in the latter half of the nineteenth century can form but a poor idea of the discomforts of life that their elders had to endure before the discoveries of science and the inventions of ingenuity placed within the reach of the humblest part of the community the thousand and one advantages we now enjoy.

CHAPTER VI

YIELDING PLACE TO THE NEW

MANY curious old customs that have now been discontinued and forgotten were in vogue when I was a boy. I shall here mention only a few.

New Year's Day, the greatest day of the year in Scotland, and always a jovial holiday in the North of England, was not observed at all in the South and West. Nor was much attention paid to Easter. May Day used to be recognised by the sweeps of the town, who exercised a sort of prescriptive right to dress up a Jack-in-the-Green (a wickerwork cage covered with ivy leaves, with a man inside to carry it), dancing round the figure in grotesque fashion, and collecting pence from the small crowds which witnessed the performance. Later in the month—the 29th—came Royal Oak Day, when the innkeepers decorated their premises with oak boughs, and the inhabitants, especially the lads, carried oak apples or oak leaves in their

buttonholes. The lad who failed to adorn himself in this manner was an object of derision to the rest, who saluted him with cries of "Shick-shack." The precise meaning or origin of this contumelious expression I never knew, nor, probably, did any other of the youths who were in the habit of using it. If nobody now takes much notice of the anniversary, it is probably because people have begun to see that the nation, after all, had no great reason to be grateful for the escape of the Royal reprobate who found shelter in Boscobel Oak. Whitsuntide met with more general recognition. The Oddfellows and the members of other friendly societies, arrayed in all the glory of regalia, and accompanied by bands and banners, marched in procession on the Monday to the village of Charlton Kings, listened to a sermon in the parish church, and then, marching home again, dined sumptuously together in the long rooms of the different inns. Another feature of Whitsuntide was the appearance of the morris dancers. Antiquaries tell us that the morris dance was originally the Moorish dance, supposed to have been brought to England in the time of Edward the Third when John of Gaunt returned from Spain. The dancers were all men, though one, who played the fool to the rest, was dressed as a woman.

Duck trousers and white shirts made up the costume, the sleeves of the performers being tied round and round with coloured ribbons, their legs below the knee bearing pads of tinkling bells. The dance they executed was curiously varied with the clapping of hands and the flirting of white handkerchiefs. Of course, after every dance, the "usual collection was taken." When Christmas came, the children went out carol-singing, while some among their elders organized parties of mummers. The mummers performed a kind of play, in the course of which, after deriding each other in rhyme, George the Fourth and Napoleon Bonaparte engaged in mortal combat. The carols sung by the children were of the most extraordinary character. Two lines of one of them ran thus :—

> It was the joy of Mary, it was the joy of one
> To see her infant Jesus sucking at her breast bone.

As a rule, the carol-singers closed their serenades with an appeal :—

> God bless the master of this house,
> Likewise the mistress too,
> And all the little children
> Who about the house do go,
> With money in their pockets
> And silver in their purse.
> Please, ma'am, to give us a ha'penny,
> And you'll be none the worse.
> H-o-o-p!

What the "h-o-o-p" meant was unknown to us; but we always ended the appeal with the shout.

Among the old customs in which I had a hand was one that finally went out with us in 1845—"beating the bounds." Parish boundaries not being clearly defined, they were now and then perambulated by churchwardens and others for the purpose of keeping them in popular memory. The perambulation in 1845 was largely attended, as was likely to be the case when waggons laden with beer, cider, and penny loaves met the crowd at various points on the route. It was estimated that the followers, when the procession reached the Golden Valley, between Cheltenham and Gloucester, numbered not fewer than 2,000. Practical jokes were supposed to be permissible on these occasions. Boys were given "something to remember" at disputable corners of the boundary, while young men and old, regardless of age or infirmities, pushed each other into ditches and rivers and horse-ponds. Unhappy (and in some cases even fatal) consequences occasionally resulted from these pranks. Thus in the perambulation of 1845 a retired tradesman who was thrown into the deepest part of the Chelt died from the effects of the immersion. The young fellow who did the mischief was tried for manslaughter, but acquitted. The reason alleged for

thrashing boys and larking with elder people was said to be that the parties concerned would recollect the boundaries and the time they were beaten if the facts of the matter in after-years should be called in question. It was alleged to be necessary that the bounds should be traced whatever the obstacles that stood in the way. Agg's House, a conspicuous mansion overlooking the town, was built in two parishes: wherefore a deputation from the crowd had to go through one window in the front and out of another at the back. An amusing account of "possessioning," as the custom was called in Berkshire, is given in an old diary of the parish clerk of Newbury. The possessioners (or processioners, to give them the name they bore in a neighbouring county) refreshed themselves with cakes and ale on the way, gave "three huzzas" at certain points, and sang psalms at others. "Stopt on the mount in the lane," says the diarist, "and cut X cross, put Osgood on end upon his head, and done unto him as was necessary to be done by way of remembrance." When the party "came to Mr. Daw's Mill, a shoemaker was pushed in and narrow escaped being drownded." The diarist ends with a note:—"Old Kit Nation was turned on end upon his head and well spanked in the corner of Northcroft and upon the Wash." Personal outrages

of this description can only be perpetrated now at the risk of the perpetrator. A man who had been bumped according to custom at Walthamstow showed his assailants some years ago that he had not been bumped according to law, for he obtained heavy damages against them. Other actions in other parts of the country have put an end to practical joking at perambulations. And perambulations have themselves ceased almost everywhere. But the custom was discontinued at Cheltenham, not because a poor fellow lost his life, but because no provision was made for payment of expenses under the new Poor Law.

Fashions, which change every year, have necessarily undergone a complete revolution in half a century. Away back in the thirties and forties shaving was almost an obligatory process. It was rarely that one met an Englishman, no matter what the class to which he belonged, who did not sport the regulation mutton-chop whiskers—clean shaven otherwise. Anybody who was audacious enough to wear a moustache was taken to be a foreigner or an acrobat. No change in the fashion in this respect occurred till our troops—all bronzed and bearded—returned from the Crimea. The manly appearance of the warriors incited civilians to follow their example. Nevertheless, it needed a popular agita-

tion to overthrow the tyranny of the razor. The Beard Movement completed what the veterans from the trenches had begun. Artists, authors, and journalists were among the first to adopt the new mode. A Royal Academician who did so (Mr. James Ward) published a pamphlet in explanation and defence, offering eighteen sound scriptural reasons why one might let the beard grow, and yet not offend his Creator. Still, lawyers and business men and ministers of religion long resisted the change. The first of the latter order whom I remember to have seen with a moustache—it was at a meeting of the Working Men's College in London—was the Rev. Llewellyn Davies, a famous Churchman in his day. If before the war with Russia a member of the Stock Exchange had had the temerity to present himself in the "house," I rather fancy he would have received attentions more personal than polite. When Edward Glynn, a Newcastle solicitor, paid a visit to London after he had adopted the new mode, the respectable lawyer upon whom he called first surveyed his moustache and beard with astonishment, and then pityingly remarked: "Well, Mr. Glynn, I hope you find that sort of thing pay down in the North." But the new order of things has so supplanted the old in the matter of shaving that every man who

has tarried at Jericho can now do exactly as he likes.

Changes of costume are almost infinite. But a word about hats. Beavers, in the early years of the century, were almost the only wear. Some were bell-topped, some other shapes, but all were more or less fluffy. The material changed, but not the general outline for many years. Everybody who had arrived at man's estate—rich and poor, gentle and simple alike—deemed a high hat necessary to existence. It was part of the uniform of the new police, and it was part of the costume of the players in the cricket-field. If you take the trouble to examine the engravings of old Radical demonstrations—those of meetings on the Town Moor at Newcastle, for example—you will see that every man in the crowd is shown to be wearing a tall hat. The reign of the stove-pipe, as it came to be called, was, I think, first seriously challenged at the time that Kossuth and his compatriots appeared in England with the more shapely Hungarian chapeau. Partly out of compliment to Kossuth, partly on account of its better appearance, but chiefly on account of its greater comfort, young Radicals of my time began to favour the Hungarian hat. I have never returned to the old, hard, distressing mode since. Ten years after Kossuth's arrival,

however, I was hissed, hooted, and followed by an unruly crowd in a remote part of Lancashire, for no other reason than that I happened to be out of the fashion in respect to headgear. Yet in that very same neighbourhood I saw disciples of Joanna Southcott—"Joanna men" as they were called by the factory operatives—wearing tall, white, fluffy hats that were even more conspicuous than my own. But mark the change. The soft, serviceable hat, altered but not improved in shape, is now the common wear of clergymen and ministers of all denominations.

It fell to the lot of a North-Country member to first break through the unwritten law of Parliament, which required that hon. gentlemen should wear nothing but high hats, unless on special occasions and for special purposes court or military suits were in order. The member in question, without intending or desiring it, caused a great sensation when he entered the sacred precincts with the style of hat he had worn for twenty years or more. A popular cartoon of the time represented Mr. Gladstone as declaring, when he saw the apparition, that he really must dissolve Parliament. The soft hat in this case had been adopted because the member concerned had in his younger days suffered from a peculiar tenderness of the skin of

the temples. Nor had he ever seen any good reason to change. Indeed, a change to the regulation mode would have been inconvenient, disagreeable, even painful. Moreover, neither Parliament nor his constitutents had any right to call upon him to make a personal sacrifice in the matter of costume any more than in the matter of the cut of his beard. There was in this case no touch of vanity or conceit, or desire to appear singular. It was otherwise in the case of a Socialist member, who, when he paid his first visit to the House of Commons, rode down to Westminster in a cloth cap, with a trumpeter blaring by his side. It was otherwise, too, with another member, who, according to a London correspondent, unbuttoned his coat in the Lobby, showed his working suit, and declared that he had come straight from the engine shop hundreds of miles away from London! Whatever the cause of the change, the old order has so given place to the new that men are now as free in the House of Commons as they are anywhere else to wear the hats and suits that suit them.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAWS OF THE STREET

PERHAPS a not uninteresting chapter might be made of the diversions in which the boys of the humbler classes were wont to find delight sixty or seventy years ago. "Boys will be boys," it is said, when any youthful escapade has to be excused. And the boys of the period named, grandfathers of the present generation, were probably no better—they were certainly no worse—than the boys of our own time. Fun and mischief are ineradicable from boyish nature. None but the sour and distempered would wish to eradicate them. At the same time, one might have expected—one undoubtedly hoped—that the training of School Boards would have resulted in obtaining from the young a greater respect for age and a greater consideration for infirmity than they seem disposed to render. A change in that regard, if in no other, is desirable for the comfort of society. But to the narrative.

Our street was in Lower Dockum—a locality

that is unknown even by name to the genteel residents in the parades and squares and crescents of Lansdowne and Pittville. It had its laws and regulations, which were as rigidly enforced as the rules of social etiquette among the rich. Never a new boy came into it but had to find his level. If he submitted without fighting, he took rank below the least. If he fought and failed, he would most likely have to fight again till his exact position was discovered. Even if he fought and won, he would still have to go on fighting till he encountered the cock of the walk himself. Great was the rejoicing —secret, but none the less sincere—of the other boys if he conquered in this final contest for supremacy, for the cock of the walk was often the little tyrant of the street. I remember well what happened when a bully of the season, confident in his own strength and endurance, challenged a new boy to fight him with one hand. The challenge was accepted; the new boy by a sudden rush sent the old one staggering to the ground; and the crowd of lesser boys who had tremblingly assembled to witness the combat saw with gratification that they had now a new master. It was to some extent true then, as it is still, that the smaller and feebler lads in the street had to submit as best they could to the exactions and oppressions of the bigger and

stronger. But a code of honour was not unknown. It was cowardly to use any other weapon than the fist, and it was still more cowardly to strike when your antagonist lay on the ground. Years afterwards, I recollect Mr. Bradlaugh giving this advice to his son: "Never hit a littler boy than yourself, and never let a bigger boy hit you." The general observance of that advice would help to put an end to the small tyrannies of the street.

Combats were not infrequent between boys of different schools and localities, as well as boys in the same street. Opprobrious nicknames were bestowed on each other by the scholars of the few schools in the town, such as "Capper's mice" or "Gardner's rats." These nicknames were shouted across the street when a Capper's mouse caught sight of a Gardner's rat, or *vice versâ*, and there an end, unless the derided boy took offence, in which case the offender would probably seek safety in flight. But parties from the rival schools would sometimes meet by accident on neutral ground, when there would generally ensue a scrap of some sort, unless one side or the other exercised the better part of valour. Worse troubles would arise if a boy belonging to one locality should wander away to a neighbourhood whose youthful inhabitants he or his companions had done or said something to outrage.

The lad in such an event could only avoid a buffeting by the free use of his legs, awaiting an opportunity for revenge when chance should place one of his tormentors in the same predicament. Boy nature, as may be gathered, is not much different from dog nature. Dogs and boys are both quiet enough till a stranger strays into what they think their territory.

No small part of a bad boy's enjoyment is derived from witnessing the irritation of elderly people. The more they can be vexed the more the bad boy is pleased. Though we were not bad boys in our street—at least, not all of us—we used occasionally to play tricks which could not in any manner be commended. Perhaps the worst was knocking at doors and then running away. An improvement on this annoyance was facilitated by a peculiar arrangement. Down the middle part of the street ran a dead wall. A string attached to a knocker and carried over the wall was operated by little imps who couldn't be seen in the darkness. How they chuckled and hugged themselves when the householder, shading a lighted candle with his hand, came to answer the knock! The trick couldn't be tried many times before it was discovered. Then the householder would appear, not with a candle, but with a thick cudgel. And then the

ingenious tormentors would have to fly round all the corners that afforded the best cover and concealment. It was well for them if they were not caught. Among the residents in our street whom the boys took a special delight in teasing was an irascible old shoemaker. But "Old Jackson" had brought the trouble on himself, for he was in the habit of capturing and destroying the implements of the boys' play—their balls or their tops—when any of them came within his reach. The irate shoemaker would have saved himself many a bad quarter of an hour if he had recognized that the street was the only playground, and that the innocent games of the boys were no real cause of offence to anybody at all.

But the boys played tricks on each other quite as often as they did on their elders. One trick of this kind was called "shoeing the wild colt." It was never tried on anybody a second time, because the first lesson was sufficient for the dullest. A victim having been found, the next thing was to select a convenient door. The "wild colt," personated by the unhappy greenhorn, was tied to the handle; a pretence was made of shoeing him—sometimes his shoes were taken off; then, suddenly, there was a great banging at the door, and all the crafty little horsebreakers would scatter and disappear

behind the shades of night. If the poor colt could not release himself before the householder came to the door, there was a trial of strength between the boy outside and the party inside. Of course the struggle ended in the triumph of the strongest. What happened afterwards depended on the disposition of the victor. If he had a spark of humour, a measure of kindness, or the least recollection of his own antics in boyhood, the fun was at an end. If not—well, the poor little victim had a double penalty to pay. The only consolation he had was that he would, some night later, assist in "shoeing a wild colt" himself.

As a rule, the games of the boys of our street were quite free from blame or blemish. There was nothing in the least wrong with marbles, peg-tops, whip-tops, kites, buttons, prisoner's base, rounders, shinney, foot-it, leap-frog, jump-a-jim-wagtail, and dozens of other modes of amusement. Marbles were played in various ways—ring-taw, knuckle-hole, etc. I suppose I must have been a bit of a dabster at ring-taw, since, when I got too old for marbles, I distributed among younger companions many hundreds of stone alleys with not a few agates. Prisoner's base was a splendid running game which it would take too long to describe, while foot-it and leap-frog were jumping

pastimes that are all too seldom played in these days. Rounders was for poor lads what cricket was for the sons of the gentry. Base-ball, so much in vogue in America, is just rounders, with the element of danger and injury superadded; while hockey, now greatly in favour even among ladies in England, is just our old game of shinney—only the top end of a broomstick served us for a bat, and a stake from the hedgeside did duty for a club. The seasons for all games came in regular succession. How they were regulated or who regulated them none of the boys ever knew. But it was a law of the street that games could not be played at other than the appointed times without risk of forfeiting the materials of the pastime. If, for instance, a party of lads were seen playing at ring-taw or knuckle-hole out of season, it was considered perfectly legitimate for another party of lads to appropriate all the marbles they could seize. Whether the scramble became a scuffle depended, of course, upon which of the parties engaged in play or foray was the stronger. But the curious thing was that there was a code of honour regulating even the scramble. Raids occurred on the Borders whenever there was a deficiency in the larder; but raids on marbles or peg-tops were only legal when the season for playing with them had passed.

All our amusements were not quite as innocent as rounders or leap-frog. There was one which was considered the more successful the more mischievous the pranks played by the players. It was called "vamping." A single lad would challenge another to vamp him—that is, to do as daring feats, such as jumping from a high wall, as his challenger. But the usual plan—I think it was sometimes called "follow-your-leader"—was for a company of boys to select the most adventurous among them, and then follow his lead in all that he did. The tricks which this leader performed and which the rest repeated were often reprehensible, sometimes dangerous, nearly always annoying. It was the element of danger, indeed, that gave spice to the game. Perhaps, also, the vampers appreciated the fun because it almost invariably set some of the older people by the ears. The leader, followed by his string of companions, would begin with a few very ordinary performances, gradually rise in audacity, and perhaps end up by doing damage to somebody's property. Thus patting a lamp-post or running into a shop would be succeeded by knocking at doors and then knocking down tradesmen's goods. The length to which the lads would go naturally depended upon the immunity they enjoyed and the forbearance of their victims. A

rush with a horse-whip or a walking-stick would probably disperse the vampers before they had done much mischief. If uninterrupted, however, they would proceed from bad to worse till they became as veritable a terror as the Hooligans of our own time; for, be it understood, the new police force, at the period of which I am writing, was only just beginning to supersede the old watchmen and constables. It ought to be said, even for the vampers, however, that the pranks they performed were merely a boisterous form of amusement, and that the annoyances which resulted from them were merely incidents of the play.

I have made no mention of football in these recollections of boyhood, for the reason that football, like golf and lawn tennis, was not numbered among the popular pastimes of the period. We used to hear of football, but only as a game that was played at the great public schools, such as Eton or Rugby. Nor did it come into general favour till many years after I had ceased to be a boy. Lawn tennis is in much the same case, except that it was not known even to schoolboys till the century had considerably passed middle age. The pervading popularity of golf is of still more recent growth. Golf was an ancient pastime in Scotland long before anybody in England took to it. Now, however,

it has spread everywhere, notwithstanding the profanity which seems to come naturally to everybody who wields a driver or a niblick. The game of bowls was, of course, not for boys. It is what is called an old man's game. But it must have been played in our town from very early days, since a tavern in the suburbs bore the name of the Bowling Green, though no green was attached to it in my time. The historic pastime, however, was still pursued in a neighbouring town—the picturesque old town of Tewkesbury. There, at the rear of a delightful old tavern, was a green overlooking the Severn that commanded beyond as exquisite a prospect of rural peace and beauty as any spot in England. But the laws of the street and the history of bowling are two such different matters that it is time to draw this chapter to a close.

CHAPTER VIII

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS

IT is not very easy for the present generation to realise the state of general education in the first half of the nineteenth century. To be able to read and write was a distinction then. Anybody who could do more was almost accounted a phenomenon. I am speaking, of course, of the poorer classes. All the other orders of society had chances which were denied to the poor. For the masses of the people very few schools were provided, and the instruction imparted in them was of the commonest quality. If a man was lamed or otherwise unfit for manual labour, he was often considered quite good enough for a schoolmaster. One used to hear it seriously argued, too, that people who were not educated had better memories and made better workmen than people who were. The idea was so prevalent even as late as the time of John Stuart Mill that that eminent thinker set himself to confute it. It was, indeed, an era of

ignorance, the era in which persons of sixty or seventy passed their earlier years.

My own education, such as it was, was begun in a dame's school somewhere. The fact would have passed out of recollection altogether if it had not happened that the old lady shook and touzled me in such a manner that I was led out into the back yard sick and ill. But the dame's school doesn't count. The Sunday School does, however, though the vague remembrances I retain of it are not pleasant. It was connected with a Wesleyan chapel. The small tradesman who conducted it was severe in his dealings with the children. This is all I recollect about him, except an incident that may convey a moral for persons in similar authority. He promised to call at our house to complain about something or other. He did not call, and I never believed anything that he said after. The only other circumstance in respect to the Sunday School that remains in my memory is the dreary time we children had of it when we were marched off to attend the morning service in the chapel. Our seats were in the gallery, but so placed there that we could not see the preacher without standing up. As we could not understand him either, for of course he was preaching to adults, we were restless and fidgety

till the sermon was over. The time of the sermon, indeed, was a time of purgatory. The preacher whom I best remember became afterwards, I think, President of the Conference. It was his practice to read his text, expound it, revert to it over and over again, and keep the Bible open at the verse or chapter till near the end of his discourse. The boys had learned that the closing of the Bible was an infallible sign that the hour of their deliverance was at hand. Boy after boy used, therefore, to stand up in his seat, peep over the gallery front, and steal a glance at the sacred volume. If it was still open, the youthful peepers would sit down, sadder but not wiser boys. When, however, the long-desired sign was seen, an eager whisper ran along the benches, "Book's shut!" The jubilation of the little crowd was now so great that nothing but the knowledge of speedy relief could have kept them in order. Perhaps this little incident also may convey a moral for persons concerned.

There was a national school in our town—only one; also a British school—only one. The latter was held under a chapel belonging to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion; the former was, of course, connected with one of the Established Churches. The Church of England, or some of

the clergy of the Church of England, must be credited with originating and providing, as far as Cheltenham was concerned, almost the only effective facilities that existed for educating the people in the early years of last century. The national school was founded by the National Society—a society which, supported by the clergy and adherents of the Established Church, rendered unmistakable service to a past generation. Other religious bodies, however, soon followed suit, notably the Wesleyans. But at the time of which I am speaking the only two schools for poor children were situated too far away to be available in my case. So I was sent to one of the few private seminaries that then flourished in the town. It was known as Gardner's Academy.

The proprietor of this establishment was Joseph Aldan Gardner—a fiddler and dancing master as well as a teacher of youth. Mr. Gardner had one distinct qualification for the office he had assumed. He was a clever penman—the cleverest I have ever known. Writing was almost the only accomplishment I acquired under his tuition. But his cleverness with the pen unfitted him for other duties in the school. Most of his time even in teaching hours was employed in producing elaborate specimens of his skill. These specimens, executed

with Indian ink on big sheets of cardboard, consisted of the usual flourishes, among which facsimiles of the business cards of the tradesmen of the town, with here and there the visiting cards of the gentry, were more or less artistically dispersed. It was understood that the tradesmen whose names and callings were thus reproduced—the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker—paid the penman for the honour he had done them. As for the specimens, they were, when completed, handsomely framed, exhibited in shop windows, and finally sold for a fair price. But the schoolmaster at one time occupied in the estimation of his boys a secondary place in his own academy. The first place was then held by a tame magpie, which performed the twofold duty of diverting the scholars and making an intolerable mess of benches, desks, and copy-books. It need hardly be said that the education imparted in a school which was conducted in the free-and-easy fashion I have described was not of the highest or soundest quality.

Most of the scholars, however, fared much better than I did. The difference arose in this way. My dear old grandmother was too poor to pay even the small fee required—sixpence or eightpence a week. It was therefore agreed that she and her daughters should do an equivalent amount of laundry-work

for the schoolmaster and his family. The arrangement was not satisfactory so far as I was concerned. Looked upon as belonging to a lower social grade than the boys who paid for their schooling in cash, I received much less attention than the other scholars. I learnt how to read and write—that was all. Cyphering should have come next, but did not. All I recollect in respect to it is a gross piece of injustice from which I suffered. I was set to do a certain sum without having received the least instruction as to the manner of doing it. And I was told I was to be "kept in" till I had completed the task—manifestly impossible in my case, since I had no intuitive knowledge of arithmetic. Wherefore, being left alone in the school-room, and knowing that I was utterly helpless, I did what any other boy would have done in the circumstances—I decamped without leave. Next day an unmerciful flogging was administered. The physical pain was soon forgotten, but the sense of wrong and outrage remained, and remains to this day. It was probably the special and unfair treatment extended to me by Aldan Gardner that induced the fatal habit of "mooching," as playing the truant was called in our part of the country. That habit once firmly rooted, there was not much chance of further improvement at Gardner's Academy.

One of the locations of the academy was a rather large room that bore the name of Sadler's Wells. It had been a place of entertainment, and it had taken its name from that once famous theatre in London where Mrs. Siddons had impersonated the heroines of Otway and Shakspeare, and where at a much later date, in the year of the Great Exhibition, I had the pleasure of seeing Phelps as the immortal misanthrope, Timon of Athens. It was while the school was held in this old temple of the local drama that an incident occurred which marks the immense difference between that time and this in the matter of sanitary precautions. The daughter of the schoolmaster fell ill of the small-pox. The school was not closed, as it would have been in these days. But, as the little girl wanted a playmate during the period of convalescence, I was selected to join her, because I had already suffered and recovered from the frightful disorder! Whether other scholars were also immune I cannot now recollect. It is probable that some were and some were not; for small-pox, as I shall have to explain later on, was as common then as many more ordinary and far less fatal ailments are now.

These other scholars were for the most part the sons of small tradesmen in the town. Only one of them, as far as I know, rose to any sort of eminence.

The exception was a little fellow—George Stevens, the son of a barber—who became known in later years as a steeplechase rider. Poor George met a tragic death while still at the height of his successful career as a jockey, not in the pursuit of his profession, but in the course of a regular ride between the town and his own place among the Cleeve Hills. He was thrown from his horse near a noted hostelry called the Rising Sun, and was found dead by the roadside. I have pleasanter recollections of the jockey than of another of the barber's sons. This youth was the first snob that had come within my ken. Proud of his delicate white hands, he held them out before a party of his school-fellows, and challenged any boy in the company to say what he could: "These hands have never done an hour's work since they were made." I do not know what the rest felt; but I held the little creature in ineffable contempt ever after.

My school days at Gardner's Academy ended at a very early age. A situation as errand boy at a bookseller's was then found for me. A circulating library was attached to the business. My duties were to clean boots and knives and brasses, and then carry books and magazines to the houses of the gentry who were subscribers to the library. The occupation was not uncongenial (except that I used

to get awfully tired and thirsty), for I was able to steal a peep at literature which would not otherwise have come within my reach. The book that was then in the greatest demand, as I gathered from so often carrying it from one house to another, was Eliot Warburton's "Crescent and the Cross," and next to it, I think, came Tennyson's poems. Pictorial advertisements of Dickens's "Chimes" were at this time (1844) exhibited at the bookseller's door. The work at the library became at last too heavy for me. And so I was sent for an all too brief season to school again. The Wesleyans had lately built a new chapel—the date on the building is 1839—under which they opened a day school. It was to this new school that I was sent. The schoolmaster knew his business; the lessons were made intelligible; the classes were made interesting; the singing and other exercises were really entertainments. Enormous was the contrast between the old school and the new. There was no more mooching—no more the least desire to absent myself from form or desk. It was a delightful time. I verily believe I derived more advantage from the few months I spent under the Wesleyan master than from all the years I had spent under Aldan Gardner. Alas! I had soon to relinquish the pleasure I derived from the instruction I was

receiving. The time had arrived when I must choose a trade, and begin the real business of life. The regret felt at leaving school just when I was beginning to realise the benefit of schooling was speedily submerged by the new delight of mixing with men in a workshop. I was a boy still, but I thought myself a man. No other boy was half my importance; no man, even, strutted the streets with anything like the dignity I assumed during the first few weeks of my apprentice days.

CHAPTER IX

APPRENTICE DAYS

THE choice of a trade was a serious question—perhaps more for my grandmother than for me, since she had to make herself responsible for a burdensome premium. There were family discussions on the subject. I wanted to be an engraver; if not, then a saddler. The reasons were curious. Aldan Gardner had at least taught me to write well, and I was fond of copying printed letters; wherefore it was thought I would make a good engraver. The saddler idea was suggested by the fact that an older boy of my acquaintance, for whom I had conceived considerable admiration, was apprenticed to that trade. Efforts were made to procure a place at an engraver's; but the only firm at that time in the town had then no opening. I was outvoted on the saddler question. But the nearest thing to an engraver was a printer. We compromised on that. I became a printer.

The result of much negotiation with the proprietor of the *Cheltenham Journal*—John Joseph Hadley—was that I was apprenticed to him for the term of seven years. The indentures, drawn up by a lawyer, inscribed on parchment, and duly signed and witnessed, were dated June 6th, 1846. It was rather a one-sided arrangement. The legal expenses were needlessly heavy. There was the lawyer's fee, and there was the cost of the stamp—one pound. Worse than these things was the premium. I was bound to serve John Joseph Hadley for seven years —the first year for nothing, all the other six years for very small wages; but my old grandmother bound herself to pay John Joseph Hadley no less a sum than fifteen pounds. Fancy £15 for a poor old washerwoman! It had to be paid in instalments, of course; but the obligation was discharged to the last penny. Mr. Hadley had a long way the best of the deal. I was to be taught the trade and craft of a printer. As a matter of fact, I was taught little more than what I picked up myself, and that only in one branch of the business. Seven years were no doubt the regulation term for such apprenticeships as mine; but seven years were at least two years longer than were absolutely required. All the same, I had a fairly happy time, except during a period to be mentioned presently. I completed the twenty-

first year of my age a good while before the expiration of my indentures. I could then have claimed my freedom, as apprentices in like circumstances usually did ; but I deemed it more honourable to observe the strict letter of the bargain, and so served my full term of seven years.

The company into which a young lad is introduced when he begins his working career may be the making or the marring of his character. There is something, but not everything, in old Robert Owen's doctrine, that man is the creature of circumstances. It is certain that many men are of the nature of chameleons, taking their colour from their surroundings. Nobody can question the immense advantage to a youth if he should be brought under wholesome influences in a workshop. But there are despicable people who seem to take a delight in corrupting their younger companions. Happily, on the other hand, there are decent people who endeavour to counteract the evil tendencies of the rest. I was neither more fortunate nor more unfortunate than the common run of apprentices. The men in our office were "much of a muchness." One was as gruff as a Griffin—which, indeed, was his name ; another was coarse and ugly and vain ; a third was equally vain, and as vile in his habits as in his conversation. The remaining

three were honest, respectable men. If I suffered no harm, I cannot honestly say that I derived any good, from contact with my fellows in the office.

Of course I had to pay my "footing," and equally of course the proceeds of the exaction were spent on drink. Drunkenness was prevalent then as now, but, I think, more prevalent now than then. Strange are the depths to which even respectable men will descend when the means of indulgence can be had for the asking. It was always the oldest and most respected man in our office who was detailed to lie in wait for the commercial travellers as they came round for orders. It seemed to me even as a boy that the process was not only undignified, but contemptible. It was beggary in its worst form, because hardly distinguishable from extortion. We were printing a mad sort of book on the Prophecies for an eccentric and benevolent old gentleman in the town. And we could always tell when the old gentleman was reading his proofs in the counting-house, from seeing through the office windows tribes of mendicants hiding and peeping round corners. They were waiting to pounce upon their prey. What better were the old and respectable printers who waited to intercept the representatives of the paper and ink firms who did

business with the office? But the odious system is still in vogue—indeed, has grown so much worse as to become intolerable. "From the man who buys the ink to the man who minds the printing machine," a leading ink-maker has said, "there is an organized scheme for blackmailing the manufacturer." Notice was therefore given by this gentleman's firm that from and after February 1st, 1900, it would not give itself nor allow any of its servants to give "chapel money," Christmas box, or wayzgoose subscription to anybody employed by its customers. The proceeding may or may not crush out the vicious system; but it is quite certain that working men will never command the respect to which their calling entitles them as long as they descend to the tricks that were practised in my apprentice days.

The gentleman to whom I was bound had many peculiarities—peculiarities of appearance as well as character. He took snuff and wore frills. The two are connected because the frills often bore traces of the snuff. A serious man, too, was John Joseph Hadley. I don't think I ever saw him laugh, except, as in duty bound, when the Rev. Francis Close told him the story of the old Jew clothesman. The sincerity of his religious convictions was shown in a way that caused infinite

discomfort to all in the office. The paper he owned and worked—for he always made up the formes himself—was a Church and King paper. A picture of the Crown and the Bible adorned its title head-line. It was published on Monday morning—an arrangement which would in ordinary cases necessitate Sunday labour. But Mr. Hadley avoided the desecration of the Sabbath by obliging us to work till twelve o'clock on Saturday night and resume operations at twelve o'clock on Sunday night. This preposterous regulation almost completely destroyed three days of the week, so far as any enjoyment or sensible pursuit was concerned. Never shall I forget the misery I felt when I had to be roused at midnight, after having, as the result of three or four hours' tossing about in bed, just fallen asleep. The very remembrance of the time is like a hideous nightmare. Napoleon talked of the two o'clock in the morning kind of courage. For my part, as a growing boy, I used to think that twelve o'clock at night was as good a time to be hung as any.

My first duties as the youngest apprentice were to sweep out the office, ink small bill formes with dabber or roller, and deliver the newspaper to subscribers in the surrounding villages. Blistered hands came from one of these operations, blistered

feet from another. When I went my rounds on Monday morning, I was given a few extra copies of the paper in case I should come across a purchaser on the road. This, however, rarely happened; not so much, perhaps, because the paper was dear as because few people could read it. The Taxes on Knowledge were in full operation at that time. No newspaper could be published without the Government stamp, while a heavy duty was imposed on the raw material. And so the public was required to pay fivepence for an article that contained only about an eighth part of the matter to be found in a penny paper of our own day. The office swept, the papers delivered, and other odd jobs performed, I was set to pick up types—what we called "pie" in the first instance. Pie is type put together anyhow for the convenience of distributing the letters into their proper boxes in the cases.[1] But I considered myself a person of no small importance when, standing on a stool, I was put to set up a bit of reprint copy. It was a humorous paragraph from a Gateshead paper—written, I have no doubt, by a gentleman (Mr. James Clephan) whose

[1] There is a story of a Leicester journalist who, when an accident had occurred on the eve of publication, went to press with a column of pie, preceded by this intimation—"Our Dutch mail has just arrived. Having no time to translate the despatch, we give it in the original."

colleague I became in Newcastle many years later. The very words of that paragraph I could recall long after, so highly did I rate my first achievement at "case."

The machinery and appurtenances of the office were of a very primitive character compared with those of newspaper offices now. Down in the cellar (in one corner of which, by the way, was the only convenience in the establishment) was an old wooden press, and a cylinder machine that was turned by a handle. One man, with another to feed the machine and a boy to take off the printed sheets, could turn out the whole issue of the *Journal* in an hour. The four pages of the paper were made up by old Mr. Hadley himself, who, when he ran short of matter or desired to curtail expenses, used to fill up a couple of columns of space with a huge standing advertisement of Grimstone's Eye Snuff—a patent commodity that has long since disappeared from the market. The formes were locked up with wooden quoins and sidesticks, and then carried below to the machine. One day a page was wrecked at the foot of the cellar stairs, whereupon a lad in the office pointed to the mass of pie and cried to the man who had been carrying the forme, "There it is, sir!" But I daresay it will require a printer to understand the ludicrous humour of

the incident. Another feature of our working-day life that will be better understood by printers than by the public was the difficulty we experienced in working by candle-light. The candles were fixed in little leaden sconces, which were in their turn fixed in the "c" box of the case. When the candles guttered, as they did very often, for they were of the commonest quality, the box was filled with tallow and the air with imprecations. It will be seen from all this that our office was a very old-fashioned affair. We had old-fashioned ways, too, one of which was that of keeping a galley of standing headings for use when required. A revolution broke out in Paris in the second year of my apprenticeship. But there had been a revolution in Paris eighteen years before. And there in 1848, among the standing headings on the galley, was a line in big type that had done duty in 1830—"The French Revolution."

The office in which I served my time is no longer an office; the newspaper we printed has been dead many years; the family to which it belonged is no longer resident in the town. The old gentleman passed away during the time I was an apprentice, while two of his sons, after continuing the paper till a few years before it expired, obtained

appointments elsewhere—the elder on the staff of a Birmingham newspaper, the younger (Thomas Russell Hadley, a gentlemanly fellow to whom I was much attached) as chief reporter to an Australian Parliament.

CHAPTER X

HEROES OF THE STAGE

EARLY in my apprentice days I came under the influence of the drama. It was the travelling, not the regular drama. I was entitled to threepence a week pocket-money. All went in a ticket for the back seats. Every Saturday night in the season, as I left work at twelve o'clock, I used to climb up a spout to read by the light of a street lamp the names of the plays that were to be performed the following week. It would, of course, have been intolerably tantalising if, with the play-bills about the town, I had had to wait till Sunday to learn the fare for Monday. If I was impatient to see the name of the play, it need not be said that I was still more impatient to see the play itself. Monday was my only night for the drama. Having started work at midnight on the Sunday, I was not required on the Monday to continue at work till eight o'clock, the usual hour of happy release on the other days of the week. So I was always in good time for the rise of the curtain.

Luckily for me, with my small allowance of coppers, there were no early doors then.

The drama, as I have said, was not the regular drama. There had been no regular drama since the regular theatre had been burnt down. The ruins of the burnt building, blocked up with boards, were still to be seen in another part of the town. I had promised in my indentures that I would not "haunt taverns or playhouses." But a booth was not a playhouse. As booths were not mentioned in the indentures, I assumed that I was quite at liberty to haunt *them*. Anyhow, I did haunt them as often as they came round. The best known of these enterprises was Hurd's.[1] It had its regular circuit, and it came round at regular intervals. Hurd's Theatre was as famous in Gloucestershire as Prince Miller's in Scotland or Billy Purvis's in Northumberland. The booth was set up in an inn yard—the Nag's Head or the King's Arms. An outside show always drew a big crowd. It was the custom of the performers—comedians, tragedians, acrobats, and ballet dancers—to parade up and down an open platform, dressed in all

[1] A clerical friend suggests that I may have made a mistake here. Horde, he says, was the name of a showman who regularly visited Taunton and the neighbourhood in the forties. It is just possible that my friend's showman and mine were one and the same person.

their stage finery, with the view of inducing the spectators to walk up and see the wonders to be presented within. The outside show was sometimes supplemented by the offer of prizes for the boys who, stripped to the waist and with hands tied behind their backs, could soonest eat the treacle rolls that were suspended from a rope across the platform. This was before the days of paraffin lamps. The platform was illuminated by great pans of blazing grease, which had now and then to be stirred up with an iron rod, and which, when thus stirred up, threw out almost as much black smoke as it did flame, accompanied by a penetrating and suffocating stench that set the poor actors and actresses a-coughing. The inside arrangements were just as primitive as those outside. A couple of hoops, fitted with sconces for eight or ten tallow candles, and hung from the roof of the booth, afforded all the light that was thrown upon the stage. As the performance proceeded, the light grew more and more dim, till the audience, scarcely able to discern one actor from another, raised loud cries of "Snuff the candles." Then an old super would lower the hoops by means of a piece of twine, doing what was required, sometimes with his fingers and sometimes with a pair of snuffers, and the next act of the drama

could be better seen. Of course, if any of the audience stood or sat under the "chandeliers," they ran a pretty good chance of getting their best clothes soiled and spoiled with droppings from the "long sixes" above them.

It was while I was so standing that I was induced, or rather compelled, to make my "first appearance on any stage." Though I was a very small boy at the time, I remember the whole occurrence perfectly. The great attraction of the evening's entertainment, sandwiched between the farce which began and the tragedy which concluded it, was a series of conjuring tricks by Ramo Samee, described on the bills of the play as "the celebrated Indian juggler." After he had executed some astonishing feats, such as swallowing a sword, producing endless articles from an empty hat, and so forth, the magician intimated as usual that he wanted a lad from the audience to assist him in the next item of the programme. Thereupon the tragic actor, who also was standing under the candles, without leave asked or granted, lifted me on to the stage. I was terrified—terrified of the juggler, but perhaps still more terrified by the sight of the sea of faces surrounding me; for, besides the audience in front, the members of the stock company were gathered at the wings. Terrified as I was, however,

I seemed to understand what Ramo Samee wanted. And Ramo Samee himself must have known from previous experience exactly how any small boy would act in the circumstances. Well, seating me on the floor beside him, the juggler told me to open my mouth and keep it open. Of course, I was too frightened to disobey orders, not even though I half-suspected that he was going to make me swallow a sword too. But it was an egg, and not a sword, that I was expected to gulp down. The egg was produced, thrown into the air, and caught as it descended. The hand which caught it was suddenly clapped over my wide-open mouth. "Did ye swallow it?" cried the Indian in an Irish accent. Fearing that unutterable things would befall me if I did not give the answer he required, I stuttered out, "Y-e-e-s." The feat was received with thunders of applause. More thunders followed when Ramo, fiddling about his involuntary assistant's ear, feigned to extract from it, not only the egg, but yards and yards of coloured ribbon. It was my first appearance on the stage—and the last.

The actors and actresses who formed the company of that canvas booth in an inn yard were veritable heroes and heroines to the lads and lasses who watched and wondered in the back seats. Tommy

Hurd was the leading comedian. Never did he speak without setting the house in a roar. What Tommy had said and what Tommy had done in the farce we had seen on Monday lasted me and my companions for delightful conversation the whole of the week afterwards. But the tragedian and his wife—Mr. and Mrs. Maclean—were held by us in special awe and reverence. If we met them in the street, as we often did, we followed them at a respectful distance, admiring every strut and movement. If they looked at us, we were as proud as Punches; if they had spoken to us, it would have been heaven; if they had shaken us by the hand or patted us on the head, we should have gone clean crazy. These two great actors—for they were the greatest we had seen, or ever expected to see—played the leading parts in a piece which had a strange and alarming effect on the mind of one of their youthful admirers. The story might as well be told.

There is an incident in the second chapter of Hall Caine's "Manxman" so perfectly true to boyish life that one cannot help thinking it is really part of the author's own experience. The incident is an adventure in which two of the chief characters in the novel are concerned—how Philip and Pete, having been fired by reading the story of the

Carrasdoo men, set about becoming pirates and wreckers themselves; how they wandered away to a cave on the seashore; how they there kindled a fire with the object of decoying unwary mariners on to the rocks; how, while dozing and blinking by the fire, they heard voices from the sea which they at first mistook for the voices of betrayed and perishing sailors; and how it turned out that the voices were those of relatives in search of the young wreckers themselves, one of whom was coddled and the other welted back to their respective homes. "Aw, yes," as a Manxman would say, "I have gone through the same sort of performance myself, though." The story of the Carrasdoo men had much about the same effect on Pete and Philip as the drama of the "Miller and his Men" had on the writer of this narrative. As the lads in the "Manxman" tried to become pirates and wreckers, so was this other lad inspired with a wish to become the chief of a band of brigands. The drama was a stock piece of the blood-and-thunder sort. It was played as an afterpiece to "Romeo and Juliet" at Covent Garden Theatre on a famous occasion in 1829—the occasion when Fanny Kemble made her *débût* as Juliet, and so took the town by storm that she retrieved the fortunes of her father, then the lessee of the theatre.

And it was played again at the Haymarket later, when, as Sir F. C. Burnand informs us, it was ever so much more funny than a burlesque of it that was produced at the Strand. It remained popular in the provinces long after it had disappeared from the London boards, and in the canvas booths long after it had ceased to be performed in the regular theatres. Thus the horrible misdeeds of Grindolf, the miller, were represented by Mr. Hurd's dramatic company in the later forties. The chief character was personated by our great tragedian, Mr. Maclean, while his wife, of course, was the miller's companion in desperate adventure. Marvellous was the impression the play produced, notwithstanding the dire climax of the drama, when mill and miller, maid and men, were all blown up together! "Aw, yes, I would become a robber myself, though." A little girl who used to frequent the back seats was to be the "maid of the mill." So earnest and enthusiastic did the young playgoer grow that he bought a pistol in preparation for the enterprise. Moreover, knowing that robbers would need to accustom themselves to work while their victims were asleep, he wandered into the suburbs at night, away from the lamps and the shop-lights, in order to overcome the fears and terrors that were always in his mind associated with darkness. But these expeditions

were not very successful ; for the embryo chieftain of a robber gang was, as I can testify, always mighty glad to get back to the town again. As for the pistol, which was the only appurtenance of the bandit profession he ever acquired, it was borrowed by another lad, who said he wanted it for an amateur performance, and was never seen afterwards.

That the imaginative youth who longed to set all the world wondering with his fiendish exploits did not develop into a meek and weak sort of Hooligan was probably due to the fact that he took a serious turn before he was two years older. But he did not cease to take interest in the drama, as may be gathered from his recollections of Barry Sullivan and Ira Aldridge, who both appeared at an improvised theatre in the town somewhere about 1853. Barry Sullivan, then a tall, slim young fellow, played Hamlet; Ira Aldridge, being a negro, played Othello without needing to blacken his face. Sullivan became a great favourite in the provinces ; Aldridge travelled and performed in almost all parts of the world. Bayard Taylor, the American traveller, records that one of the strangest spectacles he ever saw was a black man playing an English tragedy to a Tartar audience at the great fair of Nijni-Novgorod in the interior of Russia. The black man was Ira Aldridge.

CHAPTER XI

PENNY DREADFULS AND CHEAP LITERATURE

THE popular literature of the first half of the nineteenth century was as scant in quantity as it was for the most part poor in quality. It is true there was no overpowering demand for literature of any sort, for the reason, as already indicated, that the masses of the people were unable to read. Creditable, but perhaps not altogether successful, efforts were made by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge to supply such want as existed. The *Penny Magazine*, which was issued by that society, was full of facts, often very dry facts—interesting, but not enlivening. Charles Knight, William Howitt, and William and Robert Chambers tried to do better, and succeeded in doing better. The publications of the Messrs. Chambers suited the popular taste then, as some of them suit the popular taste now. There was and is so judicious a blending of light and heavy literature in *Chambers's*

Journal that that periodical has helped to educate, inform, and entertain many generations of the British public. Whenever it came in my way, as it did sometimes, I revelled in its pages. The *Penny Magazine* also was a great delight on the rare occasions that I saw it. But I remember best the *Family Herald*, *Reynolds's Miscellany*, and Lloyd's "penny dreadfuls."

Excepting "Pilgrim's Progress," "Gulliver's Travels," and the "Arabian Nights," I saw and read none of the books which entrance young minds. The religious meaning of the first, the satirical meaning of the second, and the doubtful meaning of the third were, of course, not understood. The story was the great thing—the trials of Christian, the troubles of Gulliver, the adventures of Aladdin. "Robinson Crusoe" was never accessible till late in life, when the taste for such productions had departed. So with "Don Quixote," Captain Cook's voyages, and Mungo Park's travels. There are certain books which must be read at the period of life suitable for enjoying them, else they are rarely enjoyed at all—never with the gusto they would have excited at the proper season. Great, therefore, was the disadvantage that poor boys of my age and condition suffered. But great was our delight, too, when chance opportunities

came in the way of such of us as could read. An opportunity of this kind arrived when a firm of printers in London, sometime about 1844 or 1845, brought out a penny Shakspeare—a play of Shakspeare's for a penny! Well do I remember this cheap treasure. It was my first introduction to the great bard. Gracious! how I devoured play after play as they came out! I was a poor errand boy at the time. When on my errands I used to steal odd moments to read my penny Shakspeare. A painful incident—inexpressibly painful to me at the time—arose out of this habit. One day another lad—a bit of a rogue I knew—asked to look at the play I was reading. Out of pure devilment (for he couldn't read himself) he refused to return it. I followed him through many streets, thinking he was playing a joke, and imploring him to give me back my precious property. But I never saw the little book again. To this day the remembrance of grief and mortification is as vivid as ever. The scene, the book, the thief—all are clearer now than greater events of yesterday.

The popular reading of the time was not all as elevating and as wholesome as Bunyan, or Shakspeare, or even Swift. Much of it, indeed, was the very reverse. At a period when newspapers were five or six times the price they are now, and

when village innkeepers found it a payable custom to let them out on hire for a penny an hour, stories of the "penny dreadful" class were issued in weekly parts. The publisher was Edward Lloyd. Mr. Lloyd was the legitimate successor of the old Alnwick printer—Catnach of the Seven Dials. He began business as the printer of sheets that were hawked and sold by the "flying stationers" —records of prize-fights, of murders, of executions, and of what purported to be "last dying speeches and confessions." Then, as time went on, he issued whole libraries of fiction, started many periodicals, and established two important and successful journals. When he died in 1890, he was the proprietor of great paper mills at Sittingbourne, of a great London daily, and of the well-known weekly that bears his name. The latter venture was as successful as any of his enterprises. It was so successful that he was enabled to pay Douglas Jerrold, the most famous wit of his age, a salary of a thousand a year for little more than the mere use of his name as editor. Lloyd's fiction was always of the strongest and most sensational character. The publisher knew how to select stories that would make the blood curdle and the flesh creep—also how to select the authors who could write them. Next to the selection of a strong story was the

selection of a strong title. Mr. Lloyd and his writers were equal to this too. The names of a few of the stories, all of which, as will be seen, have subsidiary titles relating to mystery or bloodshed, may give an idea of the intellectual food on which the masses of the people were fed in the old days :—

Ada the Betrayed, or the Murder at the Old Smithy.
Adele, or the Pirates of the Isle.
The Curse, or the Outlaws of the Old Tower.
The Old Monastery, or the Deed of Blood.
Gonzalo the Bandit, or the Bereaved Father.
Olivie, or the Mysteries of Pigani Castle.
The Black Monk, or the Secret of the Grey Turret.
Alice Home, or the Revenge of the Blighted One.
The Black Mantle, or the Murder at the Old Ferry.
The Smuggler King, or the Foundling of the Wreck.
Villeroy, or the Horrors of Zindorf Castle.

Many of those terrifying narratives were published in *Lloyd's Penny Weekly Miscellany of Romance and General Interest*. Others were issued in weekly instalments. The latter were illustrated with rude woodcuts. One of these woodcuts haunted me for years after I had first seen it. A masked robber, holding a dark lantern in one hand and an uplifted dagger in the other, was seen creeping towards a bed on which an old gentleman, with his arms outside the quilt and a tasseled

nightcap on his head, lay sleeping. I could see and hear the rest of the tragedy—the stealthy tread of the robber, the sudden plunge of the dagger, the blood-stained bedclothes, the dying groans of the night-capped victim. Another picture also haunted me. It was one of the illustrations to "Villeroy." The vaults of a castle; a trap-door evidently leading to the dungeons below; the villain of the story, or rather one of the villains of the story, peering into the depth by the light of a mediæval lamp. The very attitude and costume of the villain are before me now. A stage attitude, wide-topped boots, trunk hose, slashed doublet, belt studded with daggers, slouch hat and long feathers—every detail is there. The pictures rivalled each other in horror. I retain a vivid recollection of the "fearful joy" I used to snatch from them every week through the window of a small newsvendor's shop in the town. I was too poor to buy the serials myself; but I borrowed from somebody a bound copy of "Villeroy, or the Horrors of Zindorf Castle." It is of this specimen of penny dreadful literature that the most vivid remembrances remain.

The romance was appropriately named, because it was filled with horrors from the first page to the last. Where Zindorf Castle was supposed to

be situated I cannot now recollect; but I do recollect that it was supplied with the usual assortment of secret doors, secret passages, and secret dungeons. The villainous personages that passed through these doors, the crimes that were committed in these passages, and the sufferings that were endured in these dungeons, were depicted and combined in such a manner as to make the young reader, if not the old, dream dreadful dreams when he went to bed. One never-to-be-forgotten evening was spent in the company of the occupants of Zindorf Castle. The elder people were all engaged in an adjoining outhouse, so that I was left alone in the family room—kitchen and sitting-room in one. There, by the light of a tallow candle (for we had neither gas nor oil lamps in those days), the development of the drama was followed with absorbing interest and terror. As crime succeeded crime, as villain followed villain, the nervous and excited reader fancied that one or other of the robbers and murderers who danced through the pages of the romance would suddenly make his appearance in person. So entirely did this idea obtain possession of his morbid and juvenile mind that he took the precaution of placing the carving knife on the table beside him! When he went to bed that night, he buried his head deep under

the sheets, dreamt of thieves and cutthroats, and woke next morning to dream again all day of the horrors of Zindorf Castle. Ah! poor lads of sixty years ago—such of them as could read at all—had to be satisfied with literary matter of a parlous character. And yet—and yet—I don't know that the lads of the present day, with all their advantages, are really any better than we were.

It may be that stories of the "Villeroy" stamp, like the chap-books of the period, encouraged and developed the taste for reading; and the taste for reading, once acquired, came in due course to need higher pabulum to satisfy it. Before it could be satisfied, a complete revolution in companionship became necessary. Frequent occasions had arisen for feeling dissatisfied with the chums of my boyhood—once particularly when some of them, having taken a bird's nest, tore the little fledglings to pieces. Protests provoked only laughter and scorn. Other incidents occurred to produce estrangement. Some of the lads had already begun to contract bad habits. Was there not a danger that bad habits would be contracted by all the rest? I resolved to sever the connection. One Sunday afternoon the usual call was made for a ramble in the fields. Word was sent to the callers that their old companion was not going to join them.

I heard from an upper room, not without a certain amount of tremor, their exclamations of surprise. They wandered off into the fields in one direction ; I, with a new companion, wandered off into the fields in another. My new companion was Young's "Night Thoughts." The old companions were never joined again. A new life had begun.

CHAPTER XII

CODDLING AND CULTURE

ALL the old reformers fought hard for education —the education of the people at the expense of the people. The fight was hopeless till the franchise was extended. "Education for all," I wrote myself in a little pamphlet entitled "An Argument for Complete Suffrage," printed at Manchester in 1860, "is an inevitable consequence of the enfranchisement of all." And I was right. The extension of the suffrage was very soon followed by the multiplication of schools. But schools have been multiplied without producing the great and beneficial results that ardent reformers expected from them—hence disappointment. The people are educated—educated at great cost—but they are neither better nor wiser than the people who were left to educate themselves.

There has been coddling as well as culture. But coddling is not necessary—isn't even desirable—nay, is positively pernicious. It corrupts the character, prevents the development of self-reliance,

makes no distinction between the fit and the unfit. It will, in the end, if unchecked, prove disastrous to society. Coddling is costly also. The coddling of the London School Board, for example, costs the ratepayers of London a million sterling per annum—an average, it was computed in 1899, of £28 per child, or eleven shillings per week, which is about the wages of an agricultural labourer in many parts of the country! "And yet," said a leading journal, "the parents of one child in five won't have the Board's education even at this price." If the money were well spent, there would not, perhaps, be much objection to the vast outlay. But is it? This is a question for experts. The unfairness, however, would remain. Many a struggling parent who pays for the education of his own children, though he is perhaps less able to do it than many of those whose children are taught at the public expense, can only afford for the purpose £10 a year each. Again, the cost of a thing is not always a criterion of its value. My own education never cost much more than sixpence a week. It was not much of an education, but it sufficed. It supplied me at any rate with the tools of knowledge. And the tools of knowledge are about all that the State ought to be expected to provide gratis, except in the case of promising and

deserving scholars. Given these tools, the child can work out its own career. Gilt-edged tools can do no more—not even such gilt-edged tools as dancing and deportment. It is well to educate the people, but the tendency of much of the School Board policy of the day is to pauperise the people. Yet School Boards ought, above all things, to beware of undermining the independence of the individual. That lost, the nation becomes little better than a machine—a mere affair of cogs and wheels.

We managed these things better in the forties. And we had no Hooligans either. I was myself, I daresay, the nearest approach to that undesirable character. We who were poor had few facilities—no free scholarships, no subsidies from Government, no classes supported by public funds; but those among us who had learnt to read and write could employ our advantages to acquire what else we desired. Every avenue of culture was open to us if we had the perseverance and the capacity to penetrate it. We had, as I have said, the tools of knowledge. Having these, it depended entirely upon ourselves what use should be made of them—whether, in fact, they should be used at all, or left to rust and decay. Some of us kept our tools bright and keen with constant friction; others neglected them as they would have neglected the

widest education itself. A lad of finer parts would, of course, have turned to better account the small benefits received from school. But I was only a very ordinary lad—gifted with nothing more than a desire to shine and a sort of feverish activity in the way of realising it. An old diary of the period, when I was off with the old companions and had for some time been on with the new, records classes or meetings every night in the week except when work detained me at the office.

If I did not at that time educate myself, I at least did the next best thing—I tried to. English grammar was picked up from Cobbett; the lessons in Cassell's *Popular Educator* afforded some insight into Latin; French was studied from the same pages in conjunction with another youth; and arrangements were made with an enthusiastic disciple of Isaac Pitman[1] to plunge into the depths of phonography, when a change of circumstances cast these and all other educational projects to the winds. Cobbett's Grammar has long since been superseded by newer treatises; but it is still an intensely interesting work, if only because of the characteristic way in which the author makes political friends and

[1] The "enthusiastic disciple" was Mr. John Lea, a gentleman of independent means, who, when he died in 1899, was described as "probably the oldest stenographer in the kingdom."

political foes supply examples and illustrations of good and bad English. John Cassell, a vendor of coffee and a lecturer on temperance, had tried several small ventures in periodical literature before he commenced his famous *Educator*. One of these was the *Family Friend*—a pleasant and cheerful publication in which Parson Frank stirred up the ambitious instincts of the young people of the day. But the *Popular Educator* was the great enterprise. It came out in weekly parts. It was badly printed, and was full of blunders and blemishes; but it contained lessons to suit all aspiring tastes, and satisfied the requirements of the young folks in a manner they had never been satisfied before. Most of the self-educated people of my age and of later generations owe a deep debt of gratitude to John Cassell. It was with such aids as have been indicated, together with readings and scribblings at odd moments of the day or night, that the desire for knowledge was in some manner gratified.

There was flourishing in Cheltenham in my young days a rather exclusive society—exclusive, I mean, in being beyond the reach of poor boys—known as the Philosophical Institution. It has gone the way of many similar societies—the way, also, of most of the old mechanics' institutes; but the handsome building in the Promenade, modelled

on the outside after a Greek temple, retains a precious place in my memory, from the lectures I heard there on literary and scientific topics. Tickets of admission occasionally came my way. When they did, they were highly appreciated. The lecturers, as the title of one of Browning's poems runs, were "people of some importance in their day." Dr. Wright, a resident physician, and the Rev. T. W. Webb, a Gloucester clergyman, frequently elucidated branches of the sciences on which they were distinguished authorities—geology and astronomy. Charles Cowden Clarke came now and then to lecture on the poets, George Dawson to expose the weaknesses and foibles of mankind, and Clara Lucas Balfour to tickle the cultivated tastes of the members on matters of a light and airy character. George Dawson—George Dawson, M.A., as he was always described in the programmes—was probably the most popular lecturer of the middle years of the century, while Mrs. Balfour, mother of the unhappy and unscrupulous Jabez Balfour, enjoyed the distinction of being about the first lady to make a reputation on the platform. Of the former—his "raucous voice," his sarcastic humour, his conversational style, and his general appearance—I retain the clearest recollection. I do not think any lecturer of my time in the matter

of quiet ease and entertaining power ever quite came up to Dawson's standard.

But the institutions of a more modest (and I regret to say more ephemeral) character—more suited to our humble means, I mean—were either started by us, or were warmly supported by us after they had been started. One was held under a Baptist Chapel; another in the vestry of the Unitarian Chapel; a third in a private house that had been purchased for the purpose by the agent of one of the political parties in the town. The Baptist Chapel affair was chiefly memorable to me from the engagement of a strange and eccentric person—a great rogue as it turned out afterwards—who professed to teach us elocution; but the story of his eccentricities and his rogueries must be told in a later chapter. The minister of the Unitarian Chapel had been the Rev. Henry Solly, who devoted many years of his later life to the task of founding Working Men's Clubs in all parts of the country, and who, when he was over eighty years of age, published his memoirs in two interesting volumes.[1] It was, however, under Mr. Solly's

[1] While these pages were going through the press, I read with great sorrow of the death of Henry Solly. This venerable friend of my youth died in March, 1903, at the residence of his son-in-law, the Rev. P. H. Wicksteed.

successor—the Rev. John Dendy, a son-in-law of the Rev. Dr. Beard of Manchester—that we were granted the use of the vestry for the meetings of the Cheltenham General Literary Union.

Unfortunately, the union was not a success, though many advantages accrued to the members from their evening chats and readings under its auspices. The longest lived of our societies was the People's Institute. The house in which it was held—21, Regent Street—became rather notorious afterwards on account of the use that was alleged to have been made of it in the manufacture of faggot votes. But the place was very popular in my time. The management was sufficiently catholic to allow all sorts of movements to be conducted in its rooms. Even Chartist meetings were held there. I presided over some of these meetings myself, although a mere boy at the time. Books and newspapers could be read in one of the rooms; classes for the study of various subjects were held in other rooms; debates on topics of current interest or speculative value took place once a week; and occasionally essays that had been awarded prizes in competition were read by the ingenious writers. We were fond of controversy in those days, some of us because we wanted to propagate what we thought were new ideas. Many a time and oft,

after floundering about in a maze of confusion in the debating class, have we delivered wonderful speeches on the way home, overpowering in argument and eloquence, confounding our opponents, and establishing as on a rock the principles for which we had been contending!

But our thirst for controversy was not satiated by the weekly debate. We had a little magazine of our own—the *British Controversialist*, which ran into several volumes, and to which we contributed papers on the negative or positive side of the questions which the editor selected. My own gratification at the acceptance of a paper on Mahomet was much marred when I came to read the production in print—shamefully and brutally disfigured by the editor's improvements! It did not occur to me then that I should in after-years have to shamefully and brutally maltreat the productions of a younger generation of aspirants. We wrote essays, too. The prizes that were offered for the best were only just sufficient to encourage effort. An amusing entry relating to this matter, dated July 13th, 1850, may be quoted from an old diary :—"Proposed to raise essay fund, and to subscribe one shilling towards it." The entry has no interest except as showing the poverty of our resources and the bent of our inclinations. A very big

scheme was initiated, however, when Boswell's "Life of Johnson" and two smaller books were offered as prizes for the three best essays on the "Advantages of Knowledge." The competition in this case was only remarkable because the award was made by a clergyman of the Church of England, the Rev. F. J. Foxton, author of the "Popular Christianity" —a neo-theological work of some repute in its day.[1]

With the desire for culture there had come a passion for politics. This passion was stimulated by the French Revolution of 1848. I was a reader of *Reynolds's Miscellany*. One day, soon after the proclamation of the Republic in France, there

[1] Mr. Foxton was also, I think, the author of another work of note, "The Gospel according to Mrs. Grundy." "Popular Christianity" was published by John Chapman along with Froude's "Phases of Faith," and Newman's "Soul, its Sorrows, and its Aspirations." It is recorded in the "Life of Lord Tennyson" that Mr. Foxton had been "Carlyle's companion and caretaker during a journey on the Continent." I was personally grateful to the reverend gentleman, because he had encouragingly written on the manuscript of the essay which gained the first prize—"The author will have an admirable style when he has written more." When a year or so later some of us had plunged into the great democratic whirlpool, we had the temerity and conceit to approach Mr. Foxton, he being, as we knew, a scholar of advanced ideas, with the view of asking him to join our movement! We were kindly received, attentively heard, and placed in a row with our faces to the light, so that we could be seen to the best advantage. Mr. Foxton did not despise us because we were young and audacious; but he did not join our movement.

appeared in it a picture of the members of the Mountain—Ledru Rollin, Louis Blanc, Pierre Leroux, Victor Schœlcher, and the other ardent Republicans and Socialists who composed the Extreme Left of the National Assembly. The picture was followed by the announcement of a new publication—*Reynolds's Political Instructor*. It supplied what some of us wanted, though not all that the most insurgent among us longed for. But the stirring events in Paris and the newer literature that began to be issued sent the young men of my age wild with excitement and enthusiasm. I had previously read the "Rights of Man" and other political works of Thomas Paine, which had seduced me from bed at five o'clock for many mornings in succession. And now I was fairly in the maelstrom.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DISEASES OF OTHER DAYS

THE diseases of one age may cease to afflict the next. Much depends upon conditions independent of human will or control: much also upon the good sense men and women exercise in applying the results of experience. Leprosy has disappeared—from the British Islands at all events. Why should not other maladies—those, for instance, which are undoubtedly generated by the improper feeding of infants? The ignorance of other days was often the cause of the diseases of other days. Our great-grandfathers cared nothing about ventilation, nor very much about sanitation either, as may be gathered from the horrible arrangement that lasted all through my apprenticeship in the printing office of a Cheltenham newspaper. Every person who could afford it luxuriated in a four-post bedstead. And curtains were drawn closely around the sleeper so as to exclude every breath of fresh air. The consequences

to our ancestors of thus inhaling for hours together the atmosphere they had themselves contaminated can readily be understood in these times. Is it any wonder that they suffered from complaints which are hardly known even by name now? As we increase in knowledge and in the wisdom to use it, healthier lives will be lived by the people. But we have not yet discarded the prejudices that fettered our predecessors. Moreover, it may be, we are by new habits and vices planting the seeds of fresh penalties for the races that are to come.

It sometimes happens that old disorders, coming at infrequent intervals, are accounted new. This, I imagine, was the case when an epidemic of influenza reappeared after an interval of many years. People talked of it as if it had never been heard of before. Their elders, however, knew better. But the same fallacies were current in my young days. I remember hearing then of a terrible disorder. It was called influenza; but it was thought and said to be something that had not previously afflicted mankind. Yet visitations of exactly the same mischief seem to have been recorded in the Middle Ages. No such mistake was made with respect to cholera. That terrible affliction paid many visits to England during the

last century. It is a singular fact, however, that it always left Cheltenham untouched. The circumstance that it did so, as I have recorded in a previous chapter, was inferentially ascribed by the Rev. Francis Close to the appeals for the intercession of the Almighty that had been offered up in the parish church. But the reverend gentleman was not so emphatic on the subject as was his colleague, the Rev. Archibald Boyd, on the subject of the sudden death of the Czar Nicholas during the Crimean war. Preaching at Christ Church, Mr. Boyd told his congregation that he regarded the event as a distinct answer to prayer. "Only a fortnight ago," he said, "the people had assembled in the house of God, and bowed themselves before Him in humble supplication. But none of us could have dreamt in what way our prayers would be answered. None of us could have imagined that, ere ten days had passed, the Angel of Death would come and lay his icy hand on the proud Nicholas and lay him in the dust." A much more rational explanation of the immunity of Cheltenham was given later by a German medical writer, that the reason it was not visited by cholera in 1832 was in consequence of the abundance of trees in its streets and squares and gardens. But indeed the place has been singularly salubrious at

all times; in testimony whereof the local historian records on August 4th, 1860—"Only five persons were buried in Cheltenham this week out of a population of 40,000. The united ages of these five were 399 years, or an average of 80 years each."

But neither trees nor prayers could save the people from visitations of small-pox. That loathsome disease made regular, frequent, almost constant appearances in England in the earlier part of the century. It was reckoned among the inevitable ailments of childhood or maturity—as certain to come as teething itself. Since it was impossible to escape the dreadful affliction, the virus was deliberately implanted in infants. An entry in the Annals of the Northern Counties for October 21st, 1787, reads thus:—"The Duchess of Northumberland arrived in Newcastle, from whence she went to Heaton Hall, one of the seats of Sir Matthew White Ridley, where her children underwent inoculation for the small-pox." The practice that was favoured by the faculty in the eighteenth century continued in favour with the populace down to near the middle of the nineteenth. Old people in my time came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to meet the disease halfway: so they prepared their children with purgatives—brimstone

and treacle chiefly—in order, as they said, to purify the blood, and then got the patients inoculated. The children who were subjected to this treatment were not placed in the hands of doctors or even druggists. A relative of my own, a very worthy woman, who, however, was not acquainted with even the elements of medicine or surgery, performed many of these operations for her neighbours. And she continued to perform them till one of her patients had the narrowest escape from death. Afraid then of the consequences of continuing the service, she inoculated no more. I was myself subjected to the process. And I suffered from so severe an attack of the malady that I bore the traces of it for many years, as did thousands of other people in my younger days. And now the visitations of the foul plague are so rare that the present generation hardly knows what "pock-marked" means.

The immunity enjoyed in our day is attributed to vaccination; but vaccination is so curious and out-of-course a process that large numbers of good folks, not understanding the mystery, have an incurable prejudice against it. Here I may record another fact within my own experience. A baby of a few months old suffered from a horrible eruption. For many months the poor mother could not fondle it—could hardly touch it, in fact,

except to wash and poultice it. For weeks and weeks, indeed, the little sufferer had to be carried about on a pillow. "Ah!" said the neighbours, when they saw it, "that comes of vaccination." But the infant had not been vaccinated at all. If it had been, the mother herself, I daresay, would have accepted the same conclusion; for whatever follows vaccination is generally put down as the result of vaccination, whereas, as in the case I have mentioned, there are certain obscure ailments that attack children under all circumstances whatsoever.

The ravages of small-pox were so conspicuous on the faces of the people in the thirties and forties that one could not pass through the streets of our towns without seeing somebody or other who had been disfigured by the disease. A Newcastle magistrate, Mr. John Cameron Swan, when a case of so-called "conscientious objection" (which is often only another name for pure prejudice and ignorance) came before him in 1899, remarked that he remembered the time "when every third or fourth person one met in the street was marked with small-pox." My own recollections coincide, if not exactly, at all events generally, with Mr. Swan's, as must those of all who have reached or passed the age of three score and ten. The late Lloyd Jones, well-known throughout the country as a lecturer

on social and political subjects, records that the one thing which struck him, when he revisited his native town of Bandon after many years' absence, was the disappearance of pock-marked people from the streets. Testimony to much the same effect is borne by William Lovett, one of the originators of the Chartist movement. Mr. Lovett, who was born at Newlyn, Cornwall, in 1800, tells us in his autobiography that he caught the foul disorder from a little girl who, her "face and arms still thickly beset with the dark-scabbed pustules," was brought into the school he was attending. "So terrible were the ravages of small-pox at that period," he writes of the first decade of the nineteenth century, "that I can vividly remember the number of seamed and scarred faces among my school-fellows. Vaccination had not been introduced into our town, though inoculation was occasionally resorted to; but it was looked upon as sinful and a doubting of Providence, although about one in every fourteen persons born died from the effects of the disease."

Statistics of mortality are alleged to bear out the impressions of observers and the testimony of medical men. According to a little pamphlet written by Mrs. Ernest Hart in 1896, and published in the same year by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, small-pox was so

terrible a plague in the last century that it killed three thousand people every year out of a million of the population. "Out of every hundred children born, ninety caught the small-pox and one-sixth of them died, and scarcely anybody grew up without having had it." Mrs. Hart remarks further that the deaths per million of the population after vaccination had been introduced fell to 600 per annum; that after Parliament had granted funds to make vaccination gratuitous, though not obligatory, the deaths fell to 305; that after vaccination had been made obligatory, but was not efficiently enforced, the deaths fell to 223; and, finally, that between 1872 and 1891, when the compulsory clauses of the Vaccination Acts were more strictly carried out, the deaths fell to 89. "The population of England and Ireland," says Mrs. Hart, "now numbers thirty million, and there would at the present time be a probable annual death-rate of about ninety thousand from small-pox if it were not for vaccination." Facts and figures to the same purport were quoted by Dr. Henry W. Newton at a Medical Congress in Newcastle. "Wherever vaccination was adopted," he said, "small-pox had been excluded, as was illustrated in the case of Germany and Austria. In Spain there were no vaccination laws in force. During the year 1889,

there died from small-pox in the province of Almeria 3,080 per million, in Murcia 2,070, in Cordova 1,400, in Malaga 1,340, in Cadiz 1,330. For the same year the death-rate in protected Germany was four per million." Professor Corfield at the same Congress warned "those who were foolish enough not to accept the advantages offered by vaccination" that they "would gradually perish by one of the most loathsome diseases that had ever afflicted the world."

It was an outbreak of an epidemic of small-pox in the city of Gloucester that elicited the warning of Professor Corfield. That outbreak, it was alleged, was the result of the neglect of vaccination. Here we have a case of a prophet not being honoured in his own country; for Edward Jenner, the discoverer of vaccination, was a member of an old Gloucestershire family. Born at Berkeley, a few miles from the city in one direction, Dr. Jenner practised medicine for many years at Cheltenham, a few miles from the city in another direction. The local connection is further strengthened by the circumstance that another Cheltenham physician, Dr. Barron, was the biographer of Jenner. But the fatal experience of the inhabitants of Gloucester has failed to remove the popular prejudice and ignorance on the subject, since Parliament itself, bowing to popular clamour,

has decreed that the laws of vaccination, no matter what the consequences to the public health may be, shall no longer be enforced where the parents of children allege or fancy that they have "conscientious objections to the practice." The folly of placing the welfare of the community at the mercy of individual caprice would perhaps be realised too late if the awful horrors of a loathsome complaint should show themselves at the beginning of the new as they did at the beginning of the old century.

CHAPTER XIV

BALLOONISTS, MESMERISTS, CONJURORS

SMALL events as much as great may indicate the condition of life in the days that are gone. Nor may they be altogether lacking in interest even if they have no bearing on the conditions of life at all. The small events that are now going to be grouped together, without any distinct connection between them, will only serve such a purpose as the indulgent reader may choose for himself.

The coronation of Queen Victoria lives in my memory, from the illuminations which marked the rejoicings in our town. The well-to-do houses, the lights in the windows, the wheelbarrow by which I was standing, are all as fresh as ever. The long line of houses, built of one pattern, were in a fashionable quarter; and the windows, being of the same size, contained of course the same number of panes. Plate glass was at that time either unknown or but little used. It had not at any rate

found its way into domestic architecture. Every window, therefore, contained sixteen or twenty squares. And each square was furnished with a candle. The effect of the burning candles, so regularly disposed, so uniformly bright, and so many thousands in number, was almost entrancing. I had never seen anything so beautiful before, and I am not sure that I have ever seen anything in the way of illuminations so really effective since.

An indistinct impression of a dark object floating and flapping in the sky, causing consternation and wonderment, crosses my mental vision. It was an air balloon, cast adrift by an aeronaut who had descended in a parachute. There had happened just before a fatal accident to another aeronaut who had attempted the same feat from Vauxhall Gardens, London. The unfortunate adventurer was named Cocking. Cocking's fate, however, did not deter a rival balloonist named Hampton from desiring to follow his example. Hampton's ascent took place in 1838 from the Montpellier Gardens, Cheltenham. But the local magistrates, while assenting to the ascent in a captive balloon, forbad the descent in the manner projected. Hampton, however, defied the authorities, cut himself loose from the earth, and made, as the local records say, "one of the most successful parachute descents in

England." The exploit was deemed a world's wonder in an age that had not seen the far more hazardous and sensational leaps from the clouds of the present day. Not long before Mr. Hampton performed his daring feat, Mr. Green, another famous aeronaut, ascended from the Montpellier Gardens in the "great Nassau balloon." Mr. Green was accompanied by Mr. Rush, the American Minister in London, and the balloon travelled a distance of ninety miles in three hours. There was much rivalry between the two principal spas in the town—the Montpellier and the Pittville, the Old Wells having fallen out of the running. The proprietor of the Pittville establishment announced a balloon ascent too. But as pipes were not laid down to the more distant gardens, it was resolved to inflate the balloon at the gas-works, remove it to the spa grounds, and there tether it till the time for its ascension arrived. Crowds of small boys were early astir to witness the removal. A gang of men held the balloon captive, while the aeronaut directed operations from the car. The work of transporting the ponderous sphere on a windy morning through the narrow streets of the town was exciting and difficult. It furnished, however, as I recollect, immense enjoyment to the small boys. Unfortunately, after escaping many perils, the

balloon was wrecked near St. Paul's Church, before it had performed half its journey to Pittville Gardens. Collision with a chimney stack caused a great rent, and the trouble and labour that had been spent were lost. Night-capped heads protruded from every window along the route, as the shouts of the crowd awoke the sleeping inhabitants. When the collapse occurred, loud were the cries of the outsiders to close the windows lest the escaping gas should in some way cause an explosion. There was no further attempt in my time to make a balloon ascent from Pittville.

Churches were plentiful in Cheltenham, and chapels were fairly numerous. Other places of faith and emotion were also in evidence. There was much talk of Mormonism among the poor in the thirties and forties. Indeed, one heard now and again of bands of converts—Latter-Day Saints was the name they assumed—migrating to the sacred city that had been founded near the Great Salt Lake. But the movement received a considerable check when the leader of the sect was transported for robbing a firm of jewellers. Much commotion was caused about the same time when a young fellow who called himself Shiloh, and proclaimed himself a prophet, appeared in the town. Shiloh's career, however, owing to the disturbances his mad antics

provoked, was cut short by the police.[1] Worse disturbances happened when, in 1850, the Pope announced the establishment of a Catholic hierarchy in England. A public meeting was held in the Town Hall to protest against "Papal Aggression." Measures were taken later to burn the Pope and Cardinals in effigy. The effigies were exhibited in a tailor's shop window, and many tons of coal and loads of faggots were purchased for the great bonfire. So intense was the excitement and so great the apprehension of riot therefrom that the magistrates issued a notice forbidding the proceedings. The mob, however, not to be defrauded of its entertainment, attempted to set fire to the Catholic Chapel, tore down the railings in front of it, and broke open the premises of several Catholic tradesmen. Hundreds of special constables having been sworn in next day, no renewal of the row occurred.

Spiritualism, which has become a sort of religion in these days, was practically unknown in the first

[1] This extraordinary fanatic, who came from America and attracted immense crowds by throwing handfuls of half-dollars among them, called himself Ecce Homo also, declared himself to be Christ, dressed himself in a white robe, and claimed to have been the cause of the potato blight! A Chartist meeting in Sandford Fields, addressed by Ernest Jones and R. G. Gammage, attracted an enormous multitude, mainly because a report had been circulated that Shiloh was to take the chair!

half of last century. It began with table-rapping. I was invited to one of the earliest performances—the exponents were strangers to the town—but, unfortunately, the tables wouldn't rap a rap. About the same time clairvoyants could be consulted by fashionable people for a fashionable fee. Hypnotism and thought-reading were not familiar names till long afterwards. But mesmerism, which seemed to be akin to both, was quite a common topic of discussion. It was discussed at our debating class. There I became intimate with a family which had the gift or faculty of mesmerism to a remarkable degree. The father was an ordinary stonemason, while his children were engaged in various occupations of a humble character. I remember one night going to the house of my friends to witness some experiments. It should be said that no member of the family made any public display of the strange powers most of them possessed, though, of course, in private circles it was well known that the father, sons, and daughters were addicted to mesmeric practices. On the occasion to which I allude I was accompanied by a mutual friend of the Winters family. The eldest daughter, a girl of my own age, was mesmerised by the father, much in the same manner as people are now supposed to be hypnotised. When in the mesmeric state, with her eyes completely closed, she went about the

house in a methodical way, poking the fire, setting the chairs to rights, and doing such other things as she was accustomed to do in her waking condition. Afterwards I held the girl's eyes, while the other visitor produced from his pocket a book she had never seen—a copy of Collins's poems—which was opened at random, and the verses on the open page of which she read as distinctly as if she could see them, though I am quite sure, from the manner in which I held her eyes, that she could not possibly see anything at all. My companion then held the girl's eyes, while I drew from my pocket some scraps of paper on which I had written a few exercises in French and English, the writing never having been seen by anybody but myself. The English part of these exercises was read without the least difficulty; but when she came to the other she quietly remarked, "Oh, that's French; I can't read French." I offer no explanation of the phenomenon; I merely put it on record.

Mesmerists and spiritualists alike have been denounced as quacks and charlatans. Two names are most prominently associated in England with the supposed exposure of spiritualistic tricks—those of Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke. Both belonged to Cheltenham. One was an innkeeper's son apprenticed to a watchmaker; the other was as poor a lad

as any in the town, with no relative but his mother. Cooke and Maskelyne, brought together as young men, commenced business as conjurors, Mr. Maskelyne being, as he still is, the inventive genius and leading member of the firm. Before establishing themselves in London, where for many unbroken years their entertainments have nightly drawn appreciative audiences to the Egyptian Hall, they amused and bewildered the country folks in the small towns and villages around Cheltenham. And hereby hangs a tale.

A Revising Barrister is holding his court at Cheltenham. The Tory party is represented by its legal agent—Mr. Frederick Stroud, author of the elaborate "Judicial Dictionary" which bears his name, now Recorder of Tewkesbury, a dear friend of my youth and ever since. A vote is claimed for Mr. Cooke by the Liberals; but objection is taken by the Tories on the ground that the house for which the vote is claimed is rented for the claimant's mother, that the claimant himself does not reside in Cheltenham at all, and that consequently he is disqualified by reason of non-residence. "What is Cooke?" asks the Revising Barrister. "A conjuror," replies Stroud. "Where does he live?" "Well, your Honour, he lives a wandering life—here to-day and gone to-morrow." "Oh! what

the law in old times called a vagabond, then." "Precisely, your Honour—a vagabond." The vote is disallowed.

Years elapse. Maskelyne and Cooke are drawing crowded audiences to the Egyptian Hall. The principal attraction is the exposure of what the conjurors call the tricks and frauds of spiritualistic mediums—the Davenport Brothers, the Fays, Dr. Slade, and others. There is a cabinet on the stage. The two performers, securely tied with ropes, take their places inside the cabinet, and a member of the audience is invited to take a seat beside them, so as to make sure that they can obtain no help from any quarter. The moment the door of the cabinet is closed the "manifestations" begin—that is to say, the usual noises are heard within, the ringing of bells, the beating of tambourines, etc. (This is the thing the Davenport Brothers did, as *they* said, with the aid of spirits from another world.) Mr. Stroud, happening to be in London, sends in his card to the entertainers. They, delighted to see an old acquaintance, assign him one of the best seats in the house. The cabinet performance is about to be given. Maskelyne and Cooke are tightly bound, and an invitation is offered to anybody in the audience to come and see fair play. Mr. Stroud is inquisitive, and volunteers. As

he is seen advancing over the stage, Maskelyne whispers to Cooke, "Here's Stroud coming. Let's pay him out for that vagabond business." All forgetful of his delinquency, and ignorant of the sudden conspiracy against him, Mr. Stroud greets his friends and takes his seat in the cabinet beside them. The door is shut; there is total darkness; and then—the band begins to play. Mr. Stroud sees nothing; but he hears and feels a great deal more than he had bargained for. "A vagabond, am I?" he hears Cooke exclaiming as he feels his ribs punched, his back slapped, his head tumbled and touzled by both performers. "For God's sake, Cooke, drop it, or we shall have the show down," he cries as he rolls about on his seat. "I've had my turn now," says Cooke, as he gives his friend a parting tickle. The shouts and shrieks of laughter are heard by the people in front, who wonder what in the world is taking place inside the cabinet. Suddenly the doors are thrown open. Maskelyne and Cooke are seen released from their bonds, while the lawyer wears an amused, but somewhat bewildered smile. The performance brought down the house.

If there be any moral to the story, it is this—that it never pays to play jokes with a conjuror, unless, like the Recorder of Tewkesbury, you are prepared to join in the laugh at the finish.

CHAPTER XV

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

MURDERS and crimes of all sorts, even though the bulk of the people could not read about them themselves, were the subjects of most absorbing interest to young folks and old "in the days when we went gipsying, a long time ago." Terrible was the impression produced by Greenacre's monstrous villainy. Somehow I formed the notion that a working man who used regularly to pass our door bore a resemblance to the murderer. And I never saw this poor man without shuddering, and even sometimes running away to hide myself. The Greenacre sensation was, however, eclipsed by that which the later crimes of the Mannings and of James Bloomfield Rush created—crimes which were, in their turn, eclipsed in tragic interest by the poisonings at Rugeley, the pathetic misdeed of Madeleine Smith, and the mysterious fratricide of Constance Kent.

Homicides were probably fewer, but executions

were more common, at the beginning than at the end of the century. Men and women were hung for almost trivial offences—hung in batches, too, after almost every assize. My grandmother used to talk of five or six poachers being hung together in front of Gloucester gaol. Townsend, the noted Bow Street runner, giving evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons in 1816, testified to these grim facts:—"We never had an execution wherein we did not grace that unfortunate gibbet at the Old Bailey with less than ten, twelve, sixteen, or twenty wretches—I may say forty, for in the year 1783, when Serjeant Adair was Recorder, there were forty hanged at two executions." The gaoler of Newgate, being asked by the Recorder a few years later how many could be executed at one time on a new gallows, complacently replied: "Well your worship, we can hang twelve upon a stretch, but we can't hang more than ten comfortably." The hangings in those days, and till long after, were always done in the open, the contention being that the gallows, like the gibbet, was a great "moral teacher." I happened to be passing Newgate Street a few minutes after nine o'clock one morning in 1857. Suddenly the street was filled with the most villainous-looking characters I ever saw in a single crowd. They

were laughing and shouting and jostling each other as they hurried along—a great stream of gaol-birds. Whence had they come? Enquiries elicited the information that they had just been enjoying an execution—fresh from the teaching of the gallows. Similar spectacles drew similar crowds to the county gaols all over the country.

We in Cheltenham always knew when Calcraft had been at work from the cries of the dealers in patter literature. Our local Catnach was Thomas Willey, a printer of ballads and broadsheets. Mr. Willey was always ready with a "last dying speech" for every criminal who was executed at Gloucester. It was generally the same speech, altered to suit the name and circumstances of the new culprit; and it was invariably adorned with a ghastly woodcut, showing the figure of a man or a woman, as the case might be, dangling from a gallows. The passage leading to Willey's printing office was crowded on the morning of an execution with an astonishing collection of ragamuffins and tatterdemalions, greasy, grimy, and verminous. Soon they were bawling their doleful wares all over the town. Where they came from was as much a mystery to the inhabitants as whither they disappeared when the last dying speech had been sold. But penny papers and recognised reporters drove the flying stationers

from the streets. Marwood by this time had succeeded Calcraft—Marwood, who told a party of pressmen who had met to compliment him that he should die happy when he had hung a reporter! Thomas Willey, by the way, was succeeded by his grandson, Thomas Hailing, and Thomas Hailing in after years made the old office famous for some of the most artistic printing ever done in England.

There were other sensational trials besides those of murderers. One of these occurred at Gloucester Assizes in 1853. But I must go back a few years earlier—to 1847 or 1848. It was the period of the dawn of youthful enthusiasm for all sorts of things—useful or useless knowledge among others. I had joined an elocution class, held under the Baptist Chapel mentioned in a previous chapter. The class was a complete *fiasco*, because the teacher was a charlatan. The man called himself Dr. Smyth, wore a shabby-genteel cloak, and put on pompous airs. It was evident from the first that he knew little or nothing about the art he undertook to teach, and so it came to pass that the committee of the society to which the class was attached gave him his dismissal. Instead of teaching the youngsters who attended his prelections anything about the proper method of reading and reciting, he occupied their attention by telling stories

about himself. One of these was intended, he remarked, to illustrate the doctrine he held, that children should be addressed as if they were grown-up people, because, if so addressed, they would soon lose their baby ways. The story was precisely similar to one which is, no doubt falsely, ascribed to Dr. Johnson. Dr. Smyth, so he told us, was driving towards Bristol, when a woman with a child asked him for a lift. Consent was given on the understanding that no baby-talk should be used. In the course of the journey, however, the mother forgot this condition, and said something about "Georgy-porgy getting a ridey-pidey." Down, observed the professor of elocution, the mother and her child had to get, making their way to Bristol as best they could without his help. A still more extraordinary doctrine was set forth by the reputed Dr. Smyth—the doctrine that sleep was not only unnecessary, but unnatural. Cattle never slept, he declared, for he had spent night after night in the fields watching them!

The professor of elocution, dismissed at Cheltenham, turned up in a new character at Gloucester Assizes a few years later. Sir Hugh Smyth, of Ashton Court, near Bristol, had died without direct issue, leaving an estate of the annual value of £20,000. A claim to the property was set up by

a person who alleged that he was the son of the late baronet, that the secret of his birth had long been kept from him, and that he had commenced proceedings for the purpose of acquiring his real position in life. Mr. Bovill, afterwards Chief Justice of Common Pleas, was counsel for the claimant when the case was entered at Gloucester. The claimant, in the course of his evidence, and in proof of his claim, produced some jewelry which he declared had belonged to old members of the Smyth family. The crisis in the trial came when Sir Frederick Thesiger, who appeared for the defence, asked the witness if he knew the name of a certain jeweller in London. It was the name of a jeweller who had manufactured for the claimant the very articles in question! The witness was confounded, his counsel threw up their briefs, and the Court ordered him to be taken into custody. Tried afterwards for perjury and forgery, the pretended Sir Richard Smyth, who was not a Smyth at all, but a certain Thomas Provis, son of a Somersetshire labourer, was sentenced to twenty years' transportation. I believe he died about twelve months after his conviction. But the Dr. Smyth who professed to teach elocution, and the Tom Provis who tried to filch an estate, were one and the same person. Augustus Hare states in his autobiography that

Provis's wife, "a daughter of De Wint the artist, had already ordered a carriage, in which she was to make a triumphal entry into Bristol, when the cause suddenly collapsed."

A more extraordinary case than even that of Tom Provis occupied the attention of the people of Cheltenham for many years. The peace and comfort of a reputable family were utterly wrecked and destroyed by the pertinacity of an unscrupulous barrister. A British admiral, Sir Robert Tristram Ricketts, Bart., died at his residence, The Elms, in 1842. Soon after his death, Mr. Augustus Newton, who had married one of his daughters, commenced proceedings which lasted from that time till 1849, and indeed were not finally concluded till 1861. Mr. Newton began operations in the magistrates' court. There he charged Lady Ricketts, the widow of the admiral, Dr. Thomas Wright, the eminent physician and geologist previously mentioned, who had married another of the admiral's daughters, and Mr. J. C. Straford, the family solicitor, with forging the admiral's will. The prosecutor occupied several days in ventilating insinuations of forgery, fraud, conspiracy, cruelty, and murder against the unfortunate accused. Not a tittle of evidence being produced to support the accusations, the magistrates dismissed the case without

calling upon the prisoners (for they had all been apprehended) for their defence. A few days later, the solicitor was presented with an address of respect and sympathy, signed by nearly every professional man in the town. But Mr. Newton was not dismayed. Application was made for a warrant to apprehend the proprietors of a newspaper, the *Cheltenham Examiner*, that had commented on the previous proceedings ; but again the magistrates refused to comply.

Next year indictments were preferred at Gloucester Assizes against Lady Ricketts and others for perjury and conspiracy, and against the newspaper proprietors for libel. Both actions failed, the grand jury in the former case unanimously declaring that "there was not the shadow of a shade of evidence in support of the charge." Mr. Newton now transferred his operations to London. Poor Lady Ricketts was arrested and dragged before the magistrates at Guildhall. The case was dismissed here also, the bench expressing "deep regret" that so base and baseless a charge should have been made. We next heard of Mr. Newton being a prisoner himself—a prisoner in Gloucester Gaol under the Insolvent Debtors Act. Other actions were instituted in 1844, the principal being a suit for £10,000 damages before the Court of Common

Pleas at Westminster against the proprietors of the *Examiner*.

Many of the most prominent lawyers of the day were engaged in the affair, including Mr. Cockburn, afterwards Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, and Mr. Fitzroy Kelly, afterwards Chief Baron Kelly. Again was the pertinacious prosecutor foiled, though he never paid a single penny of the costs of the defence which he was ordered to defray. Then ensued actions against the High Sheriff of Gloucester, against the Sheriff's officers, and against the solicitor to the newspaper proprietors. Two further actions against the *Examiner* were tried in 1847, making six in all. Mr. Straford in the same year was indicted on the old charge, and with the old result, in the Court of Queen's Bench. Two years later, the judgment of the Prerogative Court, accompanied by indignant animadversions on the conduct of the opposing parties, established the validity of the admiral's will. Although the prosecutor was subsequently disbarred for unprofessional practices, the end of his outrageous proceedings was not reached till the appeal case, "Newton *v.* Sir Cornwallis Ricketts," was dismissed by the House of Lords in 1861.

The newspaper which had suffered so much from the attentions of Mr. Newton remarked at the close of the case in 1849 that "those who are inexperienced

in the harassments of litigation know nothing of the vast amount of wrong and persecution which may be inflicted under colour of the law." For a period of seven years the unhappy family of Sir Robert Ricketts and its legal adviser were "tortured by the most cunning devices, subjected to the most harassing disquiet of mind and body, and mulcted in legal expense which of itself swells into a fortune." It is lamentable that the forms of law should permit the perpetration of so much cruelty and mischief. But Lady Ricketts, who survived her trials and miseries for two years, was fortunate in one respect. The case against her was not taken up by the populace ; nor did noblemen and members of Parliament provide her pursuers with vast sums to assist the persecution : otherwise Augustus Newton might have become as great a figure in the annals of chicane as Arthur Orton himself. The butcher of Wapping was so much the hero of the hour that it was almost dangerous to doubt the truth of his story. And this reminds me of an incident which shows how some of the humbler classes looked at the Claimant's claim. The time was in the crisis of the case, when Orton, being under cross-examination by Mr. Coleridge, was wriggling and frizzling on a moral gridiron. I was travelling in a third-class carriage between Cheltenham and Tewkesbury. Enter a

labouring man in fustian. "How is Sir Roger gettin' on now?" he asked. "Oh, very badly," I replied, looking up from a newspaper. "Well," continued the labouring man, "it wud be a pity now, wudn't it, if he wus to lose the estate after all the trouble he's bin at to get un?"

CHAPTER XVI

CHARTISM

IT has already been mentioned that I found myself very early in life whirling and swirling round the political maelstrom. I was a very youthful atom indeed when, fired by the enthusiasm that seemed to impregnate the air, I became a member of the National Chartist Association—the association that was formed to demand the immediate adoption of the People's Charter. The Chartist movement was the only movement of the time that seemed calculated to captivate the imagination of young and earnest politicians. I had not then reached the mature age of seventeen. Before I was two years older I was taking the chair at Chartist meetings and corresponding with members of Parliament concerning the treatment of Chartist prisoners. But even at that time I was "a Chartist and something more," for it appeared to me that the Charter fell far short of the ideal that ought to be sought and

must be attained before society could be constituted on a proper basis. And so, while still active in Chartist circles, I was at the age of eighteen years and a half elected president of a Republican Association! Of course I had all the confidence of youth. What did statesmen or philosophers know about the way to manage national affairs, or the principles on which governments should be based, compared with what I and my comrades knew? We had generous impulses in those days at all events. We lacked judgment, discretion, every sort of prudent virtue; but we despised all mean and sordid interests. It is perhaps the only excuse that can be offered for the conceit and presumption with which we of the younger race of politicians astounded and affronted our elders.

The Chartist movement was some eight or ten years old when I entered it. The history of the movement—probably the greatest popular movement of the nineteenth century—has yet to be written. Materials for a work worthy of the subject are perhaps not abundant. The "Life of Thomas Cooper," the "Life and Struggles of William Lovett," the sketch published many years ago by R. G. Gammage, will assist the future historian. But the story of that stormy episode in the political life of the working classes could only have been told with effect by

a writer who shared in its passions and was a witness of its weaknesses. And one by one all those who possessed the requisite acquaintance with the period have disappeared from the scene. John Arthur Roebuck was (with an exception to be presently named) the last survivor of the politicians who, meeting in conference in 1837, passed the resolutions which afterwards formed the basis of the People's Charter. But as the most interesting period of the Chartist movement did not commence till after the Charter had been formally approved at a great meeting in Birmingham in 1838, there were others besides Roebuck who could have related as it ought to be related the history of the great agitation. These, too, however, have also disappeared. So it is extremely unlikely that any competent or satisfactory narrative of a stupendous national crisis will ever now be given to the world.

The demand for universal suffrage and other changes in the mode of representation grew out of the natural discontent of the masses of the people with the Reform Bill of 1832. That great measure —for, after all, it *was* a great measure—satisfied the middle classes; but it made no change whatever in the political position of the bulk of working men. There had been a sort of understanding

that the power which would be acquired by the passing of the Reform Bill would be used afterwards for securing still further improvements in the distribution of the franchise. But when the expectations thus formed were not realised, the working classes established associations of their own. One of these had been initiated by a Cornish carpenter named William Lovett. The People's Charter, as intimated above, was the outcome of a conference between representatives of Lovett's association and certain members of Parliament who sympathised with the popular demand. The members of Parliament comprised Daniel O'Connell, Charles Hindley, John Temple Leader,[1] William Sharman Crawford, John Fielden, Thomas Wakley, John Bowring, Daniel Whittle Harvey, Thomas Perronet Thompson, and John Arthur Roebuck.

Having agreed to certain propositions, the conference appointed a committee of twelve persons —six members of Parliament and six members of the London Working Men's Association—to draw up a Bill embodying the principles that had been

[1] John Temple Leader, the last survivor of the twelve politicians who initiated the People's Charter, died at Florence in March, 1903, at the advanced age of 93. Mr. Leader, once member for Westminster, was as well known in his day as Mr. Labouchere is in ours; yet he had so long outlived his fame that few papers announced his death, and fewer still could recall anything about him.

THE CHARTIST CONVENTION OF 1839.

(From a contemporary print.)

[*To face p.* 155.

approved. The working men so appointed were Henry Hetherington, John Cleave, James Watson, Richard Moore, William Lovett, and Henry Vincent, while the six members of Parliament were O'Connell, Roebuck, Leader, Hindley, Thompson, and Crawford. The document which was drawn up by the committee, and which came soon to be known as the People's Charter, made formal demands for six points—universal suffrage, vote by ballot, annual parliaments, equal electoral districts, payment of members, and the abolition of the property qualification. The Charter, adopted at a great meeting held in Birmingham on Aug. 6th, 1838, was submitted to a meeting held in Palace Yard, London, in the following month, when one of the resolutions was moved by Ebenezer Elliot, then famous as the "Corn-Law Rhymer."

It was resolved at both gatherings to call a Convention of Delegates, and to obtain signatures to a National Petition beseeching Parliament to enact the Charter. The Convention, which consisted of fifty-five delegates, said to have been elected by three millions of persons, met first in London, and subsequently in Birmingham. The meeting in London was held at the British Coffee House, Feb. 4th, 1839. A print of the scene, giving portraits of some of the principal members of the

Convention, was published at the time. All the members are now dead, George Julian Harney, who died in 1897, being, I believe, the last survivor. The National Petition, bearing, it was alleged, 1,280,000 signatures, was placed in the hands of Mr. Thomas Attwood, then member for Birmingham, the leading spirit of one of the Political Unions which had been chiefly instrumental in carrying the Reform Bill. There were probably exaggerations as to the numbers which took part in the election of delegates; but the rapidity with which the movement spread to every part of the country, and the enthusiasm with which it was received in all the great centres of population, could not be exaggerated. The portentous agitation was viewed with some alarm by the Government, which set about an attempt to arrest it. Unfortunately, the purposes of the Government were assisted by the Chartists themselves; for they indulged in foolish language, resorted to foolish threats, and commenced preparations for still more foolish proceedings. Arms were bought; bands were drilled; the "sacred month" was suggested. But the Convention dissolved in the autumn of 1839, and the Charter was as far off as ever.

The popular power which the movement had developed, however, did not dissolve with the

Convention. Many men of mark and vigour, besides the originators of the Charter, joined the agitation. Not the least eloquent of these was Thomas Cooper, and not the least energetic George Julian Harney. But the most prominent of them all was an Irishman —Feargus O'Connor. Gifted with great talent for winning the favour and applause of the populace, O'Connor was then and for long afterwards the idol of the day. Hundreds of thousands of working men were almost as devoted to him as the better spirits of Italy at a later date were devoted to Joseph Mazzini. When he addressed in the rich brogue of his native country "the blistered hands and unshorn chins of the working classes," he appeared to touch a chord which vibrated from one end of the kingdom to the other. Wherever he went he was sure of a vast and appreciative audience.

The popularity of the *Northern Star*, which O'Connor had established as the organ of the movement, was almost equal to his own. But, powerful as O'Connor was, and vast as was the circulation of the *Northern Star*, no great progress seemed to be made in influencing either the Ministry or the Parliament. A new Convention was subsequently summoned in London—John Frost having in the meantime made his abortive attempt at Newport—

and a new association was projected by Lovett. Bitter feuds, however, broke out between O'Connor and the rest of the Chartist leaders, so that much of the strength of the agitation was wasted in personal squabbles. Moreover, the most absurd schemes were proposed for forcing the Government to yield to the popular demands.

I have alluded to the "sacred month." This was a proposition that the working classes should enter upon a strike for that period throughout the whole country. Thomas Cooper tells us how an old Chartist, who had been a member of the first Convention, proposed at a meeting in the Potteries "that all labour cease till the People's Charter becomes the law of the land." The same wild scheme, not long subsequently, was submitted by Dr. McDouall, who had then become a prominent leader of the movement, to a meeting of the Chartist Executive in Manchester. Another singular device was that the people should abstain from consuming excisable articles, so as to paralyse the financial arrangements of the Government. There were partial strikes in Lancashire; Chartist families here and there (my own included) abstained for a time from using tea, coffee, sugar, spirits, and tobacco; but the attempt to obtain the Charter by these means failed as utterly as the attempt of Frost to

promote an insurrection of the labouring classes in Wales.

The aims and claims of the Chartists were, to a certain extent, shared and approved by middle-class Radicals. With the view of separating what was reasonable in the movement from what was ridiculous —the principles of the Charter from the violent means which were advocated to secure them—there had been formed what was called the Complete Suffrage party. Joseph Sturge, an estimable Quaker of Birmingham, was the chief figure in the new party. Associated with Edward Miall, Laurence Heyworth, the Rev. Thomas Spencer, and the Rev. Patrick Brewster, Mr. Sturge had entered into negotiations with Lovett, Collins, Bronterre O'Brien, and other old Chartists who dissented from O'Connor's tactics. The result was another conference—the Birmingham Conference of 1843. Four hundred delegates assembled on the occasion. The Conference was, perhaps, the most important—certainly the most influential—gathering of the kind that had been held since the Charter had been promulgated. Thomas Cooper, who was present, informs the readers of his biography "that the best orator in the Conference was a young friend of Lovett's, then a subordinate in the British Museum, but now known to all England as the highly successful barrister,

Serjeant Parry." But neither Parry's eloquence nor Sturge's good intentions could evoke harmony out of the discordant elements that had then met together. If there had been anything like union, the political future of England might have been changed. As it was, the Conference broke up in confusion.

The divisions which were manifested in Sturge's Conference became more marked in the councils of the Chartists themselves. O'Connor added to these divisions by mixing up with the demand for the suffrage his disastrous and preposterous Land Scheme. Nevertheless, he kept his hold of the movement down to the time of the great demonstration on April 10th, 1848. Excited by the events which had just taken place in France, the Chartists thought they saw an opportunity of impressing the Government with the extent of their numbers, if not with the justice of their claims. Unfortunately, they only succeeded in frightening the Government into acts of trepidation and terror. Nor did the new National Petition they promoted produce any effect on the Legislature. The failure of the demonstration on Kennington Common marked a turning-point in the history of Chartism. Down to that time it had at least maintained its position in the country; but after that time it began to decline.

The authority and influence of the great Feargus, weakened by the events of April 10th, weakened still further by the gradual collapse of his land ventures, rapidly faded away. Other men became prominent in what remained of the movement—Ernest Jones, Gerald Massey, and the founder of *Reynolds's Newspaper*. Various attempts were likewise made to resuscitate the agitation—notably by Thornton Hunt and George Jacob Holyoake. But Chartism as a political force was beyond redemption. Julian Harney and Ernest Jones helped to keep it alive by means of publications—*Red Republicans*, *Friends of the People*, *Vanguards*, *Notes to the People*, *People's Papers*, and other periodicals whose very names are now almost forgotten. But the few that continued the struggle quarrelled among themselves. Harney at last abandoned the now hopeless business. Jones, however, supported by a declining number of adherents, maintained the fight down to 1857, when he too was starved into surrender. Penury was the lot also of one of the best known of the Chartist officials. For many years during the latter period of the agitation the name of John Arnott as general secretary appeared at the foot of all the official notices of the Chartist Association. Some time about 1865 I was standing at the shop door of a Radical bookseller in the

Strand. A poor half-starved old man came to the bookseller, according to custom, to beg or borrow a few coppers. It was John Arnott! Chartism was then, as it really had been for a long time before, a matter of history.

CHAPTER XVII

YOUNG CHARTISTS AND OLD

FEW men now living, I fancy, had an earlier introduction to Chartism than I had. My people, though there wasn't a man among them, were all Chartists, or at least all interested in the Chartist movement. If they did not keep the "sacred month," it was because they thought the suspension of labour on the part of a few poor washerwomen would have no effect on the policy of the country. But they did for a time abstain from the use of excisable commodities. There were other indications of their tendencies. We had a dog called Rodney. My grandmother disliked the name because she had a curious sort of notion that Admiral Rodney, having been elevated to the peerage, had been hostile to the people. The old lady, too, was careful to explain to me that Cobbett and Cobden were two different persons—that Cobbett was the hero, and that Cobden was just a middle-class advocate. One of the pictures that I longest remem-

ber—it stood alongside samplers and stencilled drawings, and not far from a china statuette of George Washington—was a portrait of John Frost. A line at the top of the picture indicated that it belonged to a series called the Portrait Gallery of People's Friends. Above the head was a laurel wreath, while below was a representation of Mr. Frost appealing to Justice on behalf of a group of ragged and wretched outcasts. I have been familiar with the picture since childhood, and cherish it as a memento of stirring times.

Another early recollection is that of a Sunday morning gathering in a humble kitchen. The most constant of our visitors was a crippled shoemaker, whose legs were of little use except to enable him to hop or hobble about on a pair of crutches. Larry —we called him Larry, because his Christian name was Laurence, and we knew no other—made his appearance every Sunday morning, as regular as clockwork, with a copy of the *Northern Star*, damp from the press, for the purpose of hearing some member of our household read out to him and others "Feargus's letter." The paper had first to be dried before the fire, and then carefully and evenly cut, so as not to damage a single line of the almost sacred production. This done, Larry, placidly smoking his cutty pipe, which he occasionally

thrust into the grate for a light, settled himself to listen with all the rapture of a devotee in a tabernacle to the message of the great Feargus, watching and now and then turning the little joint as it hung and twirled before the kitchen fire, and interjecting occasional chuckles of approval as some particularly emphatic sentiment was read aloud. But Larry had other gods besides Feargus. One was William Cobbett. Among his cherished possessions were two little volumes of Cobbett's works—the "Legacy to Parsons" and the "Legacy to Labourers." These volumes, I recollect (for Larry, though I was but a lad, loaned them to me as a special and particular favour), were preserved in wash-leather cases, each made to fit so exactly and close so tightly that no spot or stain of any sort should reach the precious pages within. Poor old Larry had a brave and wholesome heart in a most misshapen frame. Dead for fifty years, he yet lives in at least one loving memory.

The humble shoemaker, though he longed for the emancipation of his class, and made what sacrifices he could to achieve it, turned his modest circumstances to the best account. No pot-house politician he. Larry and his wife were as cheerful a couple as could be found in the town. Riches are not necessary to produce the blessings and

comforts of home. A bright fireside is not incompatible even with poverty, or at least with the very humblest of means. This was demonstrated in Larry's cottage. It consisted of just two rooms—a kitchen and a loft—though it had what are almost unknown advantages in large towns: a plot of ground for flowers in front and a bigger plot for fruits and vegetables at the back. But it is Larry's kitchen —at once his parlour and his workshop—that lives in my recollection. To say that it was as "clean as a new pin" is to give but a faint idea of the spotless brightness of everything in it. The very floor, brick though it was, was better scrubbed than many a dining table I have seen since. The pots and pannikins, the cans and canisters, those simple tin or pewter ornaments of the mantelshelf, shone like silver. All else about the apartment, where there was a place for everything and everything was in its place, was equally conspicuous for the polish that was given to it. Larry's cottage, as the result of the industry of Larry's wife, was a veritable palace for cleanliness and comfort. Even the old cripple's low shoes were a wonder; for they shone so brilliantly that a cat, seeing her reflection in them, as in the pictorial advertisements of Day and Martin's blacking of that time, would have almost arched her back for a conflict with her counterpart. And the

venerable couple, in spite of their penury, were probably as happy a couple as any in the kingdom. If all Chartist homes had been as well kept as Larry's, there might have been less discontent in the country, but there would have been more force and vitality in the movement to which the masses of the people gave their sanction. As a striking example of devotion to political ideals among the poor, the lame old shoemaker retains a treasured place in the recollection of the days that are gone.

While I was still a boy, though even then interested in political affairs, our town was visited by two of the Chartist chiefs. One was Feargus O'Connor, the other Henry Vincent. Some excitement was caused by the intimation that the former gentleman was expected to arrive by a certain route at a certain time. I joined a party of elder people to go out and meet him. We went to a neighbouring village, sat on a bridge, and waited. Our visitor did not come—at least, not our route. That night or the next night I have a faint recollection of seeing an orator in his shirt-sleeves addressing a crowd in the markets. It was Feargus. He was expected again in the first month of 1848, when a procession of carts and waggons passed through the town on the way to Snig's End, one of the estates which had been purchased under

the Land Scheme. This time, however, he did not come at all. Vincent's visit occurred about 1841. It was after the "young Demosthenes," as he was called, had suffered two periods of imprisonment—first in Monmouth Gaol, and afterwards at Millbank and Oakham. The meetings he addressed were held in a stable or coach-house —at any rate the room or building was in a livery stable yard. I recollect the locality well, though not a word that was said there. What I do recollect also is the suspicions that were expressed in our household as to the cause of the change of tone observable in Vincent's utterances before and after imprisonment. The fiery and reckless orator of 1839 had become sober and restrained. The simple people of that day could only account for the change on the ground that the Government had somehow found means to influence or corrupt him. When Vincent next appeared in the town, it was as the spokesman of the Peace Society, not of the Chartist Association.

Chartism had interested me as any other stirring movement with which my friends and relatives were connected would have done. But the time soon arrived when I became interested in it on my own account. The local leader of the party was a blacksmith—J. P. Glenister. Others with whom

I became associated—all much older than myself —were shoemakers, tailors, gardeners, stonemasons, cabinetmakers, the members of the first-named craft greatly predominating. There had been an earlier leader of the name of Millsom, a plasterer; but he, I think, was then dead. Next to Glenister's the names I best remember among my old associates —all forgotten now save by a very few—were those of Hemmin, Sharland,[1] Glover, Hiscox, Knight, Ryder, and Winters. They were earnest and reputable people—much above the average in intelligence. Glenister was probably the least educated among them. But he had one qualification which the others had not—he could make a speech. Not much of a speech, perhaps, though the speaker generally contrived to make his audience understand what he wanted to say. The old blacksmith usually, in virtue of his standing among us, presided over our meetings. One night, while he was so presiding, somebody spoke of Tom Paine. Up jumped the chairman. "I will not sit in the chair," he cried in great wrath, "and hear that great man reviled. Bear in mind he was not a prize-fighter. There is no such person as Tom Paine. Mister Thomas Paine, if you please." Glenister soon afterwards

[1] Edward Sharland, now nearing ninety years of age, is still living at Cheltenham.

emigrated with his family to Australia, and one heard of him occasionally as doing well in his new home—which, being an honest and industrious man, he was every way likely to do.

It came to pass that the insignificant atom who writes this narrative, having all the effrontery of youth, took a somewhat prominent part in the Chartist affairs of the town. The first important business in which he was concerned was the National Petition for the Charter which was set afloat immediately after the French Revolution of 1848. It was alleged to have received 5,700,000 signatures; but the number was subsequently reduced to 2,000,000, which included many fictitious names —the work of knaves and enemies in order to bring discredit on the document. The animated scenes at our meetings where the petition lay for signature are still fresh in the memory. Then came active operations for getting Chartist leaders to the town.

Thomas Cooper was rather a frequent visitor. Two impressions remain—one, that he recited Satan's speech from Milton with magnificent effect; the other, that he had a most irritable temper. I had been concerned with another youth in organizing a lecture at the Montpellier Rotunda. We had occasion to whisper to each other about

some matter of business while the lecture was being delivered. Cooper caught sight of us, stopped, and then covered us with confusion as he solemnly assured the company that he would only resume his discourse "when those two young men have finished their conversation." The matter of business, whether it suffered from the delay or not, had to stand over till the close of the meeting.

Cooper's visit happened in March, 1851. Three months later came Ernest Jones. Our gathering, in default of a better place, was held in a market garden. It was not a large gathering—only 150 or 200 present, the result, probably, of showery weather. Jones had been in prison the year before for uttering seditious language. The treatment he had suffered was abominable. Petitions for inquiry were promoted; a select committee of the House Commons was appointed to investigate; a blue book containing the evidence was printed; and there, I think, the matter ended. As chairman of one of the meetings, I had some correspondence with Mr. Grenville Berkeley, then member for Cheltenham. The hon. gentleman was courteous in his replies, sent me a copy of the blue book, but could not, or at any rate did not, do anything else.

Our next Chartist visitor, I recollect, was Mr.

R. G. Gammage, the author of a sketch of the history of Chartism, who subsequently studied medicine under great difficulties, and settled down as a practitioner in Sunderland. Gammage's visit coincided with the occurrence of the General Election of 1852. We therefore got him nominated so that he might have an opportunity of making a speech from the hustings. This was all we wanted, for of course it would have been utterly useless to go to the poll in the then state of the franchise. Suffice it to say that Gammage made what we all thought a capital speech for the Charter.

There will be other occasions for describing the old electoral methods. But I may perhaps be excused for referring in this place to an affair preliminary to the contest of 1852 in which I bore a small part. The Chartists, even though they had few votes, were at that time numerous enough to make their favour worth cultivating. The agents of the Whig party therefore organized an open-air meeting of the working classes in the Montpellier Gardens. It was attended by about 2,000 persons. The resolutions were ingeniously framed to propitiate the Chartists and at the same time assist the candidature of the Whig nominee. Having, I suppose, made myself conspicuous at some of our meetings, I was invited to take part

with Glenister in this gathering of working men. One of my aunts happened to be passing the Gardens, heard the cheers and saw the crowd, and so went to see what was the matter. Great was her astonishment to observe her precocious nephew on the platform proclaiming at the top of his voice the inalienable right of every man to the suffrage! The agents of Mr. Craven Berkeley, then the Whig candidate for the town, turned the meeting to good account, advertising in all the local papers the resolutions that had been adopted, with the names of the working men and others who had proposed and seconded them. I was told I had done well on the occasion.[1] If so, it was the only time I ever did well in like circumstances. But I had an uneasy consciousness that we had been "used" by the party wirepullers; as, indeed, we no doubt had been. Used or not, however, we had the satisfaction a few weeks later of hearing our own candidate propound the true doctrine from the hustings.

[1] The juvenile orator was a nine days' wondér—at least he thought he was. Just about that time we used to read in the newspapers of the exploits of "the boy Jones," a pertinacious imp who could not be kept out of the Queen's apartments in Buckingham Palace. It was suggestive of similar notoriety, though of a less undignified sort, that a section of the people of Cheltenham for the space of a week or more talked of "the boy Adams."

CHAPTER XVIII

FOOLISH AND FIERY CHARTISTS

CHARTISTS were of many sorts. There were moral-force Chartists and physical-force Chartists; there were Chartists and something more; there were whole-hog Chartists, bristles and all; and there were Chartists who cried aloud, "The Charter to-day, and roast beef the day after!" Indeed, the divisions among them were almost endless—at least as endless as the men who set up as leaders, for every little leader had his little following, while the bigger leaders had bigger followings. It was these divisions that robbed the movement of the power it would otherwise have wielded and of the success it would otherwise have achieved. But the chief cause of dissension was the means that should be pursued to attain the end desired. While the wiser heads were advocates of moral pressure, the more foolish and furious contended that carnal and lethal weapons were the

only weapons Governments could be made to fear or understand.

There was, no doubt, some excuse for the wilder spirits of the movement, inasmuch as the middle classes not long before had set the example of truculence. The men of 1832, who demanded "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill," were just as violent in the language they used as the bitterest of the Chartists. Nor did they scruple to threaten the direst consequences to the aristocracy, and even to royalty itself, if reform should be denied. An instance of the desperate measures to which the middle classes were prepared to resort at that period was disclosed to William Lovett by one of the principals engaged to carry out the scheme. "When," writes Lovett, "the Duke of Wellington was called to the Ministry, with the object, it was believed, of silencing the Political Unions and putting down the Reform agitation, an arrangement was entered into between the leading Reformers of the North and Midland Counties and those of London for seizing the wives and children of the aristocracy and carrying them as hostages into the North until the Reform Bill was passed. My informant, Mr. Francis Place, told me that a thousand pounds were placed in his hands in furtherance of the plan, and for hiring

carriages and other conveyances, a sufficient number of volunteers having prepared matters and held themselves in readiness. The run upon the Bank, however, having been effective in driving the Tories from office, this extreme measure was not necessary." Moreover, the surrender of the Duke of Wellington, who confessed that he had to choose between civil war and compliance with the wishes of the people, had gone a long way to warrant the conclusion that Governments were more amenable to force than to reason.

The Chartists had, perhaps, another excuse in the ferocious sentiments which a minister of religion had uttered in the course of the agitation against the New Poor Law. This agitation was in full swing when the Charter was framed. The year which witnessed the inception of that instrument witnessed also the unrestrained eloquence of Joseph Rayner Stephens. This reverend firebrand, whose biography has been written by George Jacob Holyoake, was not a Chartist. As a matter of fact, he seemed to care little for the political rights of the people so long as certain of their social and domestic rights were not infringed. But it was no fault of his that he did not plunge the land into fire and bloodshed. Speaking at Hyde on Nov. 14th, 1838, just after the Charter had been promul-

gated, he advised his hearers to "get a large carving-knife, which would do very well to cut a rasher of bacon or run the man through who opposed them."

Earlier in the same year (on January 1st) Mr. Stephens was in Newcastle. This is what he is reported to have said there:—"The people are not going to stand this (the New Poor Law), and he would say that, sooner than wife and husband, and father and son should be sundered and dungeoned and fed on 'skillee'—sooner than wife or daughter should wear the prison dress—sooner than that, Newcastle ought to be, and should be, one blaze of fire, with only one way to put it out, and that was with the blood of all who supported this abominable measure."

Mr. Stephens declared in the same speech—"He was a revolutionist by fire; he was a revolutionist by blood, to the knife, to the death. If an unjust, unconstitutional, and illegal parchment was carried in the pockets of the Poor Law Commissioners, and handed over to be slung on a musket or a bayonet, and carried through their bodies by an armed force or by any force whatever (that was a tidy sentence), and if this meeting decided that it was contrary to law and allegiance to the Sovereign —that it was altogether a violation of the Constitution

and of common sense—it ought to be resisted in every legal way. It was law to think about it, and to talk about it, and to put their names on paper against it, and after that to go to the Guildhall and to speak against it. And when that would not do, it was law to ask what was to be done next. And then it would be law for every man to have his firelock, his cutlass, his sword, his pair of pistols, or his pike, and for every woman to have her pair of scissors, and for every child to have its paper of pins and its box of needles—(here the orator's voice was drowned in the cheers of the meeting)—and let the men, with a torch in one hand and a dagger in the other, put to death any and all who attempted to sever man and wife."

With such examples before them, it was not surprising that the Chartists also used violent language. Nor was it surprising, perhaps, that they went further, and conceived violent projects.

Violent projects were certainly conceived in many parts of the country. A plot was formed to seize Dumbarton Castle; Frost, Williams, and Jones endeavoured to raise an insurrection in Wales; there was even a scheme to burn down Newcastle. The story of the Tyneside episode is told by Thomas Ainge Devyr. The book in which

it is recorded is rightly enough named—"The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century." It was published by its author in New York in 1882. Patrick Ford had at that time accorded Devyr "the privilege of having letters addressed to him at the office of the *Irish World*." It was in that office in that year that I made his acquaintance. The acquaintance was renewed some years later, when Devyr, then a very old man, revisited the scene of the agitation in which he had taken an active part fifty years before. My old friend had led an adventurous life—in Ireland, in England, in America. He was a Nationalist in Ireland, a Chartist in England, a kind of revolutionist even in America. Anyway, he had only scorn and contempt for the politicians of America. "Democrats?" he said to me: "they call themselves Democrats, but they are all thieves." While in England, he served on the staff of the *Northern Liberator*—a Radical newspaper which had been established in Newcastle by Augustus Beaumont, a member of the Jamaica Legislature, but which was afterwards acquired by Robert Blakey, then a prosperous furrier in Morpeth, later a professor in an Irish College. Devyr, as a writer on the *Liberator* and the corresponding secretary of the revived Northern Political Union, seems to have written most of the turgid manifestoes

of the party that appeared during 1838. Many are set out at length in his "Odd Book." It is clear, too, that he was closely associated with the sanguine or sanguinary men of the period—Thomas Horn, Robert Peddie, John Rewcastle, Dr. Hume, William Thompson, John Mason, Thomas Hepburn, James Ayre, Richard Ayre, John Blakey, Edward Charlton, and a blind orator named Cockburn—down to the time when he deemed it prudent to seek safety across the Atlantic. Now to his story.

Disturbances occurred in Birmingham early in August, 1838. "Then," says Devyr, "commenced the work of 'preparation,' and from that time to November we computed that 60,000 pikes were made and shafted on the Tyne and Wear." The number, he admits, would seem to be exaggerated. But—"I was present in some part of nearly every Saturday at the pike market, to take sharp note of the sales. The market was held in a long garret room, over John Blakey's clog shop in the Side. In rows were benches or boards on tressels, among which the Winlaton and Swalwell chain-makers and nail-makers brought in their interregnum of pikes, each a dozen or two, rolled up in the smith's apron. The price for a finished and polished article was two and sixpence. For the article in

a rougher shape, but equally serviceable, the price was eighteenpence." Besides pikes and pike-shafts, caltrops, intended to be strewn over the roads for the purpose of laming the horses of the cavalry, were manufactured at Winlaton. On one occasion, as Devyr tells us, a case of fifty muskets and bayonets was imported from Birmingham. And shells and hand-grenades were manufactured to scatter destruction all around.

The conspirators meant business, or at any rate mischief. One of the orators had declared—"If the magistrates Peterloo us, we will Moscow England." The secret organization, according to Devyr, took the form of classes of twelve, each with a captain, and all sworn to obey orders, maintain secrecy, and execute death upon traitors. "It was strongly urged that on the night of the 'rising' all the Corporation police should be slain on their beats." The outbreak was to begin on a Saturday night. But only seventy men out of ten times that number who had enrolled themselves gathered on the night preceding it. "Finding they were not in a condition for a stand-up fight, it was strongly urged that the torch should be resorted to." Newcastle was to be reduced to a heap of blackened and smoking ruins.

Meantime, news had arrived of the failure in

Wales. It was resolved to await events. But the old desire for burning and bloodshed came back again. "We have resolved to do it," cried John Mason: "we must rouse the people by some desperate action, and the torch is to be the action." Devyr protested; but the conspirators informed him that "flame and combat would have full possession of Newcastle before midnight." All the same, the day dawned without disturbance, and soon afterwards the conspirators were either in flight or in hiding.

Such is the story of my Irish friend, Thomas Ainge Devyr. It is a story I have heard old Chartists dispute, and other old Chartists say they believe. Devyr concludes his narrative with the mention of two humorous incidents. One was that James Ayre, a builder to trade, declared when he was arrested that he would agitate no more in the old way, but for the time to come would "agitate the bricks and mortar." The other incident was that Robert Peddie, "a man of all work or any work," threatened Devyr and Rewcastle with the scaffold, because they would not furnish him with a horse and carriage to capture Alnwick Castle! The castle, Peddie averred, contained arms and treasure, while "its pastures were filled with just such rations as the revolutionary forces

required." "A young butcher followed in his train for several days to take charge of this department!"

The spirit of violence, or rather to threaten violence, animated some of the physical-force Chartists long after the Newcastle conspirators had fled or been imprisoned. When George Julian Harney was nominated on the hustings at Wakefield against Lord Morpeth, an old friend of mine who was present describes the striking effect produced as a forest of oak saplings rose in the air in answer to the call for a show of hands for the Chartist candidate. Nor was it the Government alone that was apprehensive of disorder on the day of the memorable demonstration on Kennington Common. The fear was general that the great gathering would end in a deluge of blood. I remember reading in the newspapers of the time (and not without a glow of satisfaction on my own part) how an Irish orator had exclaimed that London would be in the hands of the Chartists on April 10th, and that that would be the signal for insurrection in all parts of the kingdom. A later friend of my own, I know, went armed to the gathering. Happily, neither he nor others had occasion to use their weapons. An echo of the trepidation among simple folks was heard as late as 1854. When a deaf old lady

in Gateshead was alarmed by the great explosion of that year, she hurried away to her friends in Sunderland. Asked what was the matter, she replied: "Aa's afeared the Chartist bodies hev brokken lowse!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE FATHERS OF THE CHARTER

THE usual notion of an agitator is that he is a man with the "gift of the gab"—what the Americans call a spellbinder. But five of the six representatives of the Working Men's Association who assisted in framing the People's Charter were not platform people at all. None of the five—John Cleave, Henry Hetherington, William Lovett, James Watson, Richard Moore—made any pretence to oratory, and seldom appeared before the public in person. But every one of them was as thoroughly honest and single-minded as any similar number that ever entered a public movement. Moreover, they had all been concerned more or less intimately in the great struggle for a free press. Lovett, a born organizer, organized many political and social associations of an advanced character—advanced, I mean, for that time. Cleave and Hetherington were printers—Hetherington the printer of that *Poor Man's Guardian* which helped so much to establish the liberty of unlicensed printing. I had

the honour of the acquaintance of Moore and Watson. Moore, married to a niece of Watson's, lived a life of industry and great domestic happiness in Bloomsbury, took an active part in the Radical affairs of the Borough of Finsbury, and served his day and generation effectually as the chairman of the committee of the Society for the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge. But of Watson, whom I knew intimately for twenty years, I must write at greater length.

James Watson was a native of Malton, where he was born in 1799. His mother, who was left a widow soon after he was born, obtained a situation at the parsonage, where she read Cobbett's *Register* and "saw nothing bad in it." James himself was apprenticed to the clergyman to learn field labour; but his indentures, owing to the reverend gentleman leaving Yorkshire for another part of the country, were cancelled before he had finished his time. Thereupon the youth set out for Leeds in search of friends and employment. While working in a warehouse, he too began to read Cobbett's *Register* and "saw nothing bad in it." Besides Cobbett's writings, he early made the acquaintance of other Radical literature of the day—Wooler's *Black Dwarf* and Carlile's *Republican*. He made the acquaintance also of some of the Radical politicians of Leeds.

Richard Carlile was at that time fighting the Government for the right of free discussion. When the intrepid bookseller, his wife and sister, were thrown into prison, he appealed to his political friends in the country to come up and help him. Watson was the second volunteer who went from Leeds. For the heinous offence of selling publications of which the authorities did not approve, he was, as I shall have occasion to show, thrice condemned to imprisonment.

It was while assisting in the agitation for a free press that Watson learned the art of a compositor, in the office in which the *Republican* was printed. There was then in London, associated with all the fearless movements of that exciting time, a young man of rare talent and large fortune—Julian Hibbert. When Watson was attacked with cholera in 1825, Hibbert took him to his house, nursed him, and saved his life. After his recovery, Hibbert, who had set up a press of his own, employed him to print some works in Greek. Watson's friend and saviour, around whom there hangs a haze of mystery and romance that can never be penetrated, died early, leaving Watson his press and printing materials. With the help of Hibbert's legacy, after an interval of propagandism on behalf of the views of Robert Owen, the Yorkshire Radical commenced business

as a printer and publisher on his own account. For something like a quarter of a century, assisted by his estimable wife, who was as devoted as himself to the propagation of Radical ideas, he sent forth a flood of the most advanced literature of the day. The works he issued were the classics of the working classes—such as Paine's "Rights of Man," Godwin's "Political Justice," Lamennais' "Modern Slavery," Volney's "Ruins of Empires," and Owen's "Essays on the Formation of Character." His little shop, too, was the rendezvous of Radical writers and thinkers. We shall see presently that he did not neglect other duties while attending to his own business. Watson contrived, by printing and folding as well as selling his publications, to make Radicalism pay its way. So that when he retired from the publishing trade in 1854 he had realised a small but sufficient competence.

Thereafter, with one or two exceptions, as when he assisted in 1858 to form a committee of defence for Edward Truelove, then being prosecuted by the Government for publishing an alleged libel on Louis Napoleon, he lived a life of quiet enjoyment and well-earned ease. Dying in 1874, he left behind him a name and fame that ought not, even by Radicals of a later era, to be allowed to perish or sink into oblivion.

If I devote a little further space to reccollections of James Watson, it is because the exposition will serve to elucidate the dejected condition of the press when he and other daring men of the period undertook its emancipation. Radicals of our day have had no experience, and can form but a poor conception, of the trials, difficulties, and privations to which the Radicals of a former generation were exposed. The struggle for an unstamped press was maintained with a courage and enthusiasm which almost excite one's wonder—which certainly arouse one's admiration—as its incidents are recalled to mind. It was the policy of the Government of that date to repress alike liberty of thought and liberty of speech. The former of these objects was sought by prosecutions for what were then called blasphemous and seditious publications; to attain the latter, no newspaper was allowed to be issued without a fourpenny stamp. Carlile, Hetherington, Cleave, and Watson, aided by a host of Radicals in the provinces—notably Abel Heywood in Manchester—fought the Government on its own ground. We have seen how Carlile, his wife and sister, were all in prison at one time. Carlile himself spent nearly ten years of his life in prison altogether. The number of his shopmen and assistants, men and women, who shared his fate,

could be counted by the score. Hetherington, publishing his *Poor Man's Guardian* in defiance of the stamp law, brought another contingent for the Government to prosecute and imprison. No fewer than five hundred persons were sent to gaol in the course of three years and a half for selling the unstamped *Guardian* alone! Mr. Spring Rice, at that time Chancellor of the Exchequer, informed the House of Commons in 1836, that three hundred persons had been imprisoned in the course of a few weeks for selling unstamped papers in the streets, and that, too, without in the slightest degree decreasing the sale! Indeed, the gaols of the country were almost choked with political prisoners, when the Government, assigning as a reason the impossibility of enforcing the law, surrendered to the champions of a free press.

It was during this magnificent agitation that James Watson underwent his three imprisonments—twelve months in 1823 for selling Palmer's "Principles of Nature," six months in 1833 for selling the *Poor Man's Guardian*, and six months again in the following year for selling the *Conservative*, another of Hetherington's papers. What he suffered in these repeated incarcerations is told in the memoir which Mr. W. J. Linton wrote and published in 1880. Suffice it to say that he was "subjected to

the same treatment as pick-pockets, swindlers, passers of bad money, committers of rape and other criminal acts of a like kind." It will perhaps surprise many who read what I am now writing that it was through such tortures as these, inflicted on hundreds of the best people in the country, that we eventually came into possession of an untaxed and unfettered press. Owing to the exertions of Watson and his comrades, the stamp duty was reduced from fourpence to a penny. But the agitation did not stop here, though it afterwards took another form. As everybody knows, or ought to know, the efforts of the Society for the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge resulted on the total abolition, not only of the stamp duty, but of the paper duty as well.

And now I may be pardoned a few words on the personal qualities of the man. James Watson had the purity of a saint, the spirit of a hero, the courage of a martyr. He was not only free from reproach—he was, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion. The trying period during which he was most prominent was fatal to many reputations. It was an age of imputation. But nobody, from first to last, ever questioned Watson's sincerity. While lying in prison, he wrote to his wife that "the study of the cause and remedy for human woe engrossed

all his thoughts." The man who thus wrote while surrounded by some of the lowest criminals of a metropolitan city had literally no ambition—none, at least, of a vulgar or even a personal sort. He neither cared for the platform nor sought reputation as a writer. It was his business and his pride to give currency to thoughts and opinions which were calculated, he believed, to improve and elevate mankind. From his shop, almost always in an obscure thoroughfare in the centre of the publishing trade, most of the Radical literature of the last generation was distributed over the country. But the work for which he will be best held in remembrance is the service he rendered to the cause of the freedom of the press.

The sixth member of the Working Men's Association which originated the People's Charter was Henry Vincent. And he differed from his five colleagues in that he was an orator, or at any rate a speaker who could, as it were, carry his audiences off their feet. Mr. Vincent, also a printer to trade, very early in life threw himself into the political agitation which then prevailed in the country. An earnest and impassioned advocate of the extension of the franchise, he was only about twenty-four years of age when he joined the committee which formulated the Charter. Of the movement which

followed the promulgation of the demand for the famous six points, he was, as already mentioned, designated the Demosthenes. It was in that character that he denounced the Government of the day as a set of knaves. Using still stronger language at Newport, Monmouthshire, he was prosecuted and imprisoned in 1839. The riots in that town, for which Frost, Williams, and Jones were condemned to death, were alleged at the trial of the three prisoners to have had for their object, not an armed insurrection of the people, but the rescue of the Demosthenes of Chartism.

Reference has been made in a previous chapter to the suspicions that were entertained to account for the marked moderation in the tone of Vincent's speeches after he came out of Monmouth Gaol. So far as the change was ascribed to the effect of improper influences, I have not the least doubt that the imputation was absolutely unwarranted. Mr. Vincent had grown wiser in prison—that was all. It was no long time subsequent to his release that he turned his great talents as a speaker into other channels, though, I believe, he never altered his opinions as to the justice of the principles he had formerly done so much to spread abroad. Within a month of his restoration to liberty, he married a daughter of his old colleague, John Cleave.

A man of fine presence, of powerful voice, of impressive delivery, Henry Vincent became one of the most popular lecturers of the day. Towards the end of the sixties he was lecturing in the Music Hall, Newcastle. I went to hear him. It was a fine performance—splendid as a piece of declamation, but neither pregnant with thought nor of much value as a literary effort. But the torrent of words, poured forth with the skill of a master, brought down thunders of applause. Henry Vincent died in 1879, save John Temple Leader the last survivor of the Chartist Fathers.

JOHN FROST.

(From a contemporary engraving.)

[*To face p.* 195.

CHAPTER XX

JOHN FROST AND THE NEWPORT RIOT

ONE of the most stirring events in the history of Chartism occurred at a very early stage of the struggle. I allude to the riot at Newport. The People's Charter was adopted at Newhall Hill, Birmingham, on August 6th, 1838. Within twelve months of that date Henry Vincent had been arrested in London, brought to Newport, tried at Monmouth, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment in Monmouth Gaol. Great was the excitement thoughout Wales, for the prisoner was a prime favourite in that quarter of the country. There were disturbances in Newport when he was brought there in custody, and there were disturbances again when he was brought before the magistrates. The popular excitement increased from the time of Vincent's conviction on August 2nd, till it culminated in an armed attack on Newport on November 4th. It is probable that the explosive character of the people of the Principality lent itself then, as it has

lent itself frequently since, to turbulent proceedings. Be this as it may, Wales became for the time being the cockpit of the kingdom. And the name of the chief actor in the turbulent proceedings which marked the close of 1839 was for many years honoured and revered by the working people as no other name in England was.

John Frost, a prosperous linendraper in the town, had been Mayor of Newport in 1836. Three years later he had so completely identified himself with the popular movement that he was one of the leading figures in the first Chartist Convention. Furthermore, he exercised great influence over the working people in the Welsh mountains. Associated with Williams and Jones, he put himself at the head of an operation which was presumed to have had for its object the overthrow of the constituted authorities, but which the legal defenders of the prisoners at the subsequent trial at Monmouth contended had no more serious design than the rescue of Vincent from prison. Miners and others, armed with muskets and pitchforks, descended from the mountains many thousands strong. The seizure of Newport by the Welsh Chartists, so the agents of the Government alleged, was to have been taken as a signal for the Chartists of the Midlands to rise in insurrection also. Whatever the intention,

the attempt at Newport was an entire failure. A great storm in the hills delayed the march of the reputed insurgents, frustrated the intended surprise, and enabled the authorities to prepare for the defence of the town. But much blood was shed, and some dozen lives were lost, during the attack on the Westgate Hotel. Occupied by the mayor and magistrates, and defended by constables and soldiers, the hotel was never captured. Marks of the conflict, however, remained for years afterwards in the wooden pillars which supported the porch. When the hotel was rebuilt some years ago, the old pillars, pierced with bullet-holes, were considered of sufficient historic interest to be preserved in the hall of the new building. There they will probably remain for many generations to testify to the tragic scenes that were witnessed around them in 1839.

The leaders of the movement—Frost, Williams, and Jones—were arrested, tried for high treason, and sentenced to be executed. I remember my elders telling me as a boy the horrifying detail, that the condemned men could hear in their cells the noise of the carpenters erecting the gallows. The extreme sentence, however, was commuted to transportation for life. As a consequence of these occurrences, John Frost was regarded as a hero and a martyr throughout the Southern and Midland

Counties. The three companions in adversity were despatched in a convict hulk with a cargo of other prisoners to a penal colony at the Antipodes. Fifteen years were spent by them among those unhappy culprits who in due course helped to found some of the settlements that have now become flourishing communities of free and honoured citizens.

First a conditional and then a free pardon having been granted to him and his companions, Frost returned to this country in 1856. It was a period of public apathy. An attempt was made to give him a popular reception. But by that time the Chartist movement had practically died out, Ernest Jones, with scarcely a shirt to his back, vainly striving to keep the cause alive. The exile had come back to a country that had almost forgotten him. Still there was a procession in London. I remember seeing it pass through Fleet Street. It was a sorry affair. What was worse, it excited the derision of the shopkeepers who bestowed any notice on it at all. Two or three hundred people at the most constituted what was intended for a great democratic demonstration. Poor Frost retired to Stapleton, near Bristol, whence he contributed to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* fragmentary accounts of his experiences and sufferings, and there,

nearly twenty years later, he died at a very advanced age.

But Frost's name and memory are still respected in Newport. Only a few years ago a later Mayor of Newport was presented with a watch that had been presented to Mr. Frost at the time he occupied the same position. And the new owner of the watch, as he informed the dinner-party at which it was handed to him, was present when the old Chartist was arrested. "John Frost," he added, "was a very clever fellow; but unfortunately he got carried away by his feelings until he lost himself." Though nobody doubts now, even if anybody ever doubted, that the project of the Welsh Chartists was utterly lacking in prudence and foresight, the man who led them and shared in their dangers must at least be credited with generous impulses.

The condition of our penal settlements was at that date indescribably horrible. Humane ideas in regard to the treatment of offenders had then hardly even begun to enter the minds of people in authority. After his return home, Mr. Frost endeavoured to arouse the attention of the public to the gravity of the ulcerous iniquities we had established in the southern hemisphere. For this purpose he published a pamphlet on the subject. Therein he described, as far it was permissible for any decent person to

describe, the infinite horrors of convict life. I must have written to him anent the publication, for I find a reply in a letter dated December 4th, 1873. "You tell me, my dear sir," he says, "that you have read my pamphlet with great interest. I cannot explain to you my feelings when I found the utter indifference to the state of society among the convicts and the cause which produced it. I sent this pamphlet to members of both Houses of Parliament, and the only notice taken was by a member of the House of Commons, who sent me the pamphlet back again." But the old Chartist's exposures may have had an effect of which the author was unaware. Certain it is, at any rate, that the system of transportation has long since been abolished, and with it have disappeared the penal settlements themselves. No more will any political or any other offender suffer tortures such as must have driven to distraction all but the coarsest and most degraded of the prisoners subjected to it.

I have said that some fragmentary papers of Mr. Frost's were published in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. They were the outcome of a suggestion that the venerable gentleman should write out his recollections of the exciting events in which he had taken part. "I have received your letter," he replied on December 4th, 1873, "and shall feel

pleasure in complying with your request." The fragments already mentioned were the result. Then came the following letter, the handwriting of which betrayed no sign of age or weakness :—

STAPLETON, *Dec.* 15, 1873.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received your letter and the *Chronicle* which accompanied it. I have seen no newspaper so full of useful and interesting matter. I shall be happy if I can to extend the circulation. I have for years been thinking on the subject of my long and suffering life, and I feel anxious that the circumstances should be placed before the public in a way likely to be interesting to the rising generation.

The plan I propose is this :—In the letter which I sent you I describe my situation after the escape from Newport, my return to the town, my apprehension, and my being placed in Monmouth Gaol. The next letter should contain an account of the trial, the verdict of the jury, the committal of myself and my companions to the condemned cell, what took place during our confinement there, our removal to Chepstow and passage to the *York* hulk at Portsmouth, our passage to Van Dieman's Land on the *Mandason* convict ship, our passage to the penal settlement at Port Arthur, my residence there as clerk to the magistrates, my transfer without any offence to one of the gangs, and other interesting matter connected with the treatment of the convicts and the terrible effects resulting from it. Then should follow an account of the various situations I filled in the colony for fifteen years, my conditional pardon, the voyage from Hobart Town to Callao, the

voyage from Callao to America, my residence there for twelve months, my free pardon, and the events from 1856 to 1873.

I will endeavour to render the narrative instructive and amusing. However, one thing must not be forgotten. I am in my eighty-ninth year: therefore it can hardly be expected that the narrative will be such as a younger man would produce. A few weeks ago I had a terrible fall, which has shaken my mind and body terribly, and from the effects of which I shall not recover. My memory has suffered, but not as to past events: these are almost as fresh as ever. I am also much troubled about my eyes. I am apprehensive that I shall become a poor blind old man. May God avert it!

I am, dear sir, respectfully your obedient servant,

JOHN FROST.

The fears which crossed Mr. Frost's mind when he penned this letter were unhappily realised. I heard from him no more. Nor did any further instalment of the narrative he sketched for himself ever reach the *Chronicle* office. Mr. Frost died a few weeks later. It is much to be regretted that he did not live to complete the task he had planned. Had he so lived, many inaccurate statements that were made at his trial would have received authoritative correction, while much interesting light would have been thrown on a somewhat obscure phase of Chartist history.

FEARGUS O'CONNOR.

(From a contemporary engraving.)

[*To face p.* 203.

CHAPTER XXI

FEARGUS O'CONNOR

SIR GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS once wittily said something to this effect, that life would be tolerable but for its amusements. Much in the same way, it might have been said that the Chartist movement would have been tolerably successful but for its leaders—some of them. There were many able men in the ranks—earnest and eloquent men. Some of them were earnest without being eloquent; a few, perhaps, were eloquent without being earnest. The great fault of all, more or less, was impatience—a desire to reap the harvest before they had sown the seed. Next to this fault was the disposition to quarrel. But quarrelling was almost inevitable when not one man, but many men, desired to become dictators. It was almost equally inevitable when such a man as Feargus O'Connor, who had few of the qualities of a powerful leader save extraordinary force of character, had acquired absolute dominion over the

cause. O'Connor quarrelled with all in turn—McDouall, O'Brien, Cooper, Harney. There were minor quarrels too—between Bronterre O'Brien and Ernest Jones, between Ernest Jones and Julian Harney, besides other rivalries among smaller men in the movement. And we of the rank and file took sides with one or the other—with fatal consequences, of course, to the movement itself.

The ascendency of Feargus O'Connor would have been unaccountable but for the fact that he owned the *Northern Star*. That paper, besides being the source of his power, was a sort of small gold mine to the proprietor. It was almost the only paper that the Chartists read, and it had in consequence a very extended circulation. Through it Feargus every week addressed a letter to his followers—"The blistered hands and unshorn chins of the working classes." The letter was generally as full of claptrap as it was bestrewn with words and sentences in capital type. But the turgid claptrap took. The people of that period seemed to relish denunciation, and O'Connor gave them plenty of it. Blatant in print, he was equally blatant on the platform. More of a demagogue than a democrat, he was fond of posing as the descendant of Irish kings. "Never a man of my order," he was in the habit of declaring, "has devoted himself as I

have done to the working classes." It was his delight, too, to boast that he had "never travelled a mile or eaten a meal at the people's expinse." He even claimed in 1851 that he had spent £130,000 in the cause of the Charter. It pleased the working people to hear themselves addressed as "Fustian Jackets," "Old Guards," and "Imperial Chartists." Nor did it displease them when their leader assumed a royal title and called himself "Feargus Rex."

The reports of some of his speeches indicate the kind of fustian in which he now and then indulged. Here is part of what he is recorded to have said at a meeting in Palace Yard, Westminster, on September 17th, 1838 :—

> The people were called pickpockets. Now, he would ask, what difference was there between a rich pickpocket and a poor pickpocket? Why, there was this difference —the poor man picked the rich man's pocket to fill his belly, and the rich man picked the poor man's belly to fill his pocket. The people had borne oppression too long and too tamely. He had never counselled the people to physical force, because he felt that those who did so were fools to their own cause; but at the same time those who decried it preserved their authority by physical force alone. What was the position in which the working classes stood? Why, they were Nature's children, and all they wanted was Nature's produce. They had been told to stand by the old constitution.

Why, that was the constitution of tallow and wind. The people wanted the railroad constitution, the gas constitution, but they did not want Lord Melbourne and his tallow constitution; neither did they want Lord Melbourne and his fusty laws. What they wanted was a constitution and laws of a railroad genius, propelled by a steam power, and enlightened by the rays of gas. They wanted a Legislature who had the power as well as the inclination to advance after the manner he had just pointed out. They wanted that the science of legislation should not stand still. The people had only to show the present House of Commons that they were determined, and its reform must take place. But still, such men as Sir Robert Peel and little Johnny Russell would try and get into it, even though they got through the keyhole. But it was said the working classes were dirty fellows, and that among them they could not get six hundred and fifty-eight who were fit to sit in the House of Commons. Indeed! He would soon alter that. He would pick out that number from the present meeting, and the first he chose he would take down to Mr. Hawes's soap factory; then he would take them where they should reform their tailors' bills; he would next take them to the hairdresser and perfumer, where they should be anointed with the fashionable stink; and having done that by way of preparation, he would quickly take them into the House of Commons, when they would be the best six hundred and fifty-eight that ever sat within its walls. He counselled them against all rioting, all civil war; but still, in the hearing of the House of Commons, he would say that, rather than see the people oppressed, rather than see the constitution violated, while the people were in daily want, if no man

would do so, if the constitution were violated, he would himself lead the people to death or glory.

This was a specimen of Feargus's early style. Mr. Gammage has preserved a specimen of his later. Describing a speech delivered at the Hall of Science, Manchester, in August 1846, when he was fighting with other Chartists about his Land Scheme, Gammage says :—

While addressing the meeting, O'Connor hit upon every sentence calculated to rouse the hostility of his audience against his detractors, and to elevate himself. He told them he had the evidence of a respectable gentleman (whom he did not say), and also that of a boy, that at the *Examiner* office they were in league with navvies to assassinate him, which led to groans and cries of "Oh! the villains!" Again he said, "Villains who quaff your sweat, gnaw your flesh, and drink the blood of infants, suppose that I too would crush their little bones, lap up their young blood, luxuriate on woman's misery, and grow fat upon the labourer's toil." (Shouts of "No, never!" and waving of hats and handkerchiefs.) "No, I could go to bed supperless, but such a meal would give me the nightmare; nay, an apoplexy." (Loud cheers, and "God Almighty bless thee!") "I have now brought money with me to repay every shareholder in Manchester." (Shouts of "Nay, but we won't have it!") "Well, then, I'll spend it all." (Laughter and cries of "Do, and welcome!") Again, he said, as an instance of his condescension, "It was related of the Queen, that when she visited the Duke of Argyle's, she

took up the young Marquis of Lorne, and actually gave him a kiss, and this was mentioned as a fine trait in her character. Why, he (O'Connor) took up forty or fifty children a day and wiped their noses, and hugged them. (Cheers, and expressions of sympathy from the females in the gallery.) Did they think he was the man to wring a single morsel from their board, or to prevent their parents from educating and bringing them up properly? No, he was not: he loved the children, and their mothers also, too much for that." (A female in the gallery: "Lawk bless the man!") For more than three hours did O'Connor address the crowded and excited meeting, which was so densely packed before he commenced that the reporters had to be pushed through the windows into the hall.

It was considered curious that Feargus's visits to towns in the provinces generally synchronised with the appearance in the same towns of a lady who was then a star in the theatrical world. This lady was Mrs. Nisbett. There was as much gossip in Chartist circles about the two as there was in Irish circles forty or fifty years later about Mr. Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea. O'Connor himself does not seem to have made much secrecy of the relations between himself and the actress; for in a letter to a person who had helped him at the Oldham election, dated August 28th, 1835, he sent his best regards to the man and his wife, "in which Mrs. Nisbett begs to join." The alliance, such as it was, was probably consecrated by

some measure of affection, since it was stated that the lady, when O'Connor had to be removed to a lunatic asylum, left the stage, and nursed and tended him as long as he lived.

The common notion of O'Connor outside the ranks of his personal followers was that he was a charlatan and a humbug—an adventurer who traded on the passions of the people for his own profit and advantage. A correcter notion would have been that he was a victim of his own delusions. It is certain that he did more than any other man in the movement—more probably than all the other men in the movement put together—to ruin the Chartist cause. But this is not to say that he was dishonest. The Land Scheme which he grafted on to the demand for political reform was one of the wildest and maddest schemes that ever entered into the mind of a rational being. It was doomed to disaster from the very beginning, and it brought loss and disappointment upon all who touched it. The originator of the scheme, however, was the greatest sufferer, for he lost his reason. The fact that the failure had this terrific effect may perhaps be regarded as at least some evidence of the man's sincerity.

The melancholy fate of Feargus O'Connor was, I think, hardly more melancholy than that of

another Irishman who figured prominently in the Chartist agitation. James Bronterre O'Brien was "a Chartist and something more." It seemed to him that political reform was less important than agrarian reform and currency reform. The doctrines he taught on these latter subjects made him an authority among a small school of Chartists. But poor Bronterre ended his days as a loafer in Fleet Street. It was there that I used to see him towards the close of his career—shabby, snuffy, beery. A good speaker even to the last, he was in demand at the Cogers and other debating halls of the Metropolis. For opening a discussion in a pothouse, he was rewarded with five shillings and his night's liquor. Another O'Brien shone or flickered in the same arenas. And of him or of Bronterre—I am not sure which—a wit of the period parodied Tennyson:

> And I saw the great O'Brien sloping slowly to the West.

CHAPTER XXII

TWO DOCTORS AND A SCHOOLMASTER

THE more conspicuous of the early leaders of the Chartists (next to those already mentioned) were John Taylor, Peter Murray McDouall, Thomas Cooper, and George Julian Harney. The two first were Scotchmen, both members of the medical profession, and both advocates of what were called "ulterior measures."

Dr. Taylor, a native of Ayr, was arrested in Birmingham, during the sitting of the first Convention in that town, for alleged participation in the Bull Ring Riots of 1839. Harney describes him as looking like "a cross between Byron's Corsair and a gipsy king," with "a lava-like eloquence that set on fire all combustible matter in its path." It was said that he had inherited a fortune of £30,000, the greater part of which he spent on revolutionary enterprises. Insurrections in Greece and conspiracies in France were alike in his line. A picturesque figure was Dr. Taylor. Hardly less picturesque was Dr. McDouall, whose

long cloak and general style helped to give him the appearance of a hero of melodrama. McDouall also was often in trouble with the authorities. Subsequent to 1848, he settled down to the practice of his profession in Ashton-under-Lyne. But not for long. Agitation had unfitted him for a regular life. Friends subscribed funds to enable him to emigrate to Australia, where, according to a sworn statement of his widow, he died "about May, 1854." That Dr. McDouall was a man of some taste and culture may perhaps be gathered from the following lines, written to the air of the "Flowers of the Forest" while he was a prisoner in Chester Castle, previous to 1840:—

Now Winter is banished, his dark clouds have vanished,
And sweet Spring has come with her treasures so rare;
The young flowers are springing—the wee birds are singing,
And soothing the breast that is laden wi' care.

But loved ones are weeping—their long vigils keeping—
The dark prison cell is the place of their doom;
The sun has nae shining to soothe their repining—
To gild or to gladden their dwellings of gloom.

To them is ne'er given the loved light of heaven,
Though sair they are sighing to view it again;
Though fair flowers are blowing, in full beauty glowing,
They flourish or fade for the captives in vain.

And thus are they lying—in lone dungeons dying—
The sworn friends of freedom—the tried and the true;
By slow famine wasted—life's bright vision blasted—
'Tis Summer's prime shaded by Winter's dark hue.

In vain are they wailing—nae tears are availing,
But tyrants exult o'er their victims laid low,
Or look on unheeding, though life's race is speeding;
Their fears will depart with the death of their foe.

But I look not so proudly, and laugh not so loudly,
Nor dream that the struggle of freedom is o'er;
Your prisons may martyr the chiefs of our Charter,
But the bright spark it kindled shall burn as before.

And Winter is coming, wi' wild terrors glooming,
To weaken the sunbeam and wither the tree;
The loud thunder crashing—the red lightning flashing,
Are the might of a people resolved to be free.

No more remarkable testimony to the exciting character of the decade from 1839 to 1849 can be adduced than the fact that almost every man who rose to prominence in the Chartist ranks during that period came under the lash of authority. Thomas Cooper was no exception to the rule. Either the Chartists were too much given to violent language and threats, or the magistrates and judges were too much given to a stringent interpretation of the law. We owe to Cooper's incarceration, however, that remarkable prison poem, the "Purgatory of Suicides." First a shoemaker, then a schoolmaster, afterwards a newspaper reporter, the author of the "Purgatory" had reached what might well be called the years of discretion before he plunged into the stormy waters of Chartism. While serving as reporter on a Leicester journal, he came to learn the miseries of

the Leicester stockingers. Also, in his official capacity, he came to attend Chartist meetings. The two experiences combined to drive him into the Chartist whirlpool. From reporting Chartist lectures he came to deliver Chartist lectures himself. Before long he was the acknowledged leader of the Leicester Chartists. Somehow, he associated Shakspeare with Chartism, and gave to his particular society the name of the bard. Other eccentricities could probably at this time have been laid to his charge. But the charge which caused him to be prosecuted in the first instance was that of having preached arson at Hanley. Acquitted on this count, he was afterwards prosecuted for sedition and conspiracy, receiving sentence of two years' imprisonment. When he had served his time and written his poem, he varied his speeches for the Charter with lectures on literary, critical, and historical subjects. Among his lectures was a series on Strauss's "Leben Jesu," then just translated by Marianne Evans, better known later as George Eliot. I remember to this day the strange effect which the reading of the summary of these discourses produced on a youthful and unsettled mind. The summary appeared in *Cooper's Journal*, a weekly periodical of much greater value than the common run of Chartist publications. But the lecturer did not himself long remain steadfast to

the views he expounded. As he had changed from piety to rationalism, so he changed from rationalism to piety again. And the rest of his long and active life was spent in preaching the Gospel to all the earth that he could reach.

Thomas Cooper had the "defect of his qualities." I have given one example of his irritability. Many others were known to his friends. Indeed, he was quite unfit for controversy. This he came to acknowledge himself: so that all through his later career as a lecturer and preacher he systematically declined discussion. Warm in his friendships, he was bitter in his animosities. An old comrade has recorded how, while he was still on good terms with O'Connor, he broke off in a speech he was delivering in Paradise Square, Sheffield, to lead the crowd in singing the Chartist song:

> The Lion of Freedom has come from his den;
> We'll rally around him again and again!

When he quarrelled with the Lion of Freedom, as he did soon afterwards, he was as impassioned in denunciation as he had before been in praise.

But Thomas Cooper had other qualities that redeemed his defects. Innumerable instances of his kindness and generosity are recorded. It is a loving trait in his character that he never forgot or neglected any old friend whom he knew to be

living in any of the towns he visited during his later peregrinations. These peregrinations continued till he was near or past eighty years of age. When his work was done, and just before he died at the venerable age of eighty-eight, he received a grant of £200 from the public funds. The grant was made on the application of Mr. A. J. Mundella, then member for Sheffield, one of his earliest political converts at the time he was leading the Leicester Chartists. Close upon a quarter of a century before his demise in 1892 (that is to say, in 1868) he corrected an erroneous report respecting himself in an amusing letter to the *Lincoln Gazette*:—"The Nottingham papers say I am dead. I don't think it is true. I don't remember dying any day last week, though they say I died at Lincoln on Tuesday. 'Lord, Lord,' as Falstaff said, 'how the world is given to lying!'"

Thomas Cooper, besides being a preacher and lecturer of no mean ability, was a man of marked literary eminence. Poet, essayist, novelist, he was also the author of a model biography. "The Life of Thomas Cooper, Written by Himself," published twenty years before he died, is so admirable a piece of work that it will keep alive his fame for years and years to come. But it contains one passage which does not, perhaps, do justice to his reasoning

powers. It is a passage in which he claims that his life was once saved by what seemed like a special intervention of Providence. When on his way from London to fulfil an engagement in the provinces, and about to enter a railway carriage at Euston Station, he was induced by a porter to take a seat in another part of the train. The carriage which he did not enter was smashed to atoms in a collision, the people in it being killed or maimed, while the carriage which he did enter was in no way injured! Thomas Cooper left it to be inferred from his narrative that Providence had interposed to save his life.

The story is as little credible as another story of a similar kind about Bishop Wilberforce—Wilberforce of Oxford and Winchester. One night, so this latter story runs, the Bishop was returning home from his club. A man's figure passed him in the street, ran up the steps to his front door, and then suddenly turned round and faced him. The man's figure was his own. Back went the Bishop to his club instead of entering his house. Next morning he heard that a chimney-stack had fallen through the roof on to his bed!

CHAPTER XXIII

GEORGE JULIAN HARNEY

NO leader of the Chartist movement left behind him a fairer record than George Julian Harney. He was the last survivor of the National Convention of 1839. John Frost lived to a greater age than Harney; but he was an older man when he associated himself with the agitation. Frost died at eighty-nine, Harney at eighty-one. Frost had reached years of maturity at the time of the Convention; Harney was only twenty-two. It is likely that he was the youngest member of that notable assembly. When he died in 1897, there died with him a fund of information about the exciting political events in which he had taken part that can now never be supplied.

It was the eventful struggle against the Newspaper Stamp Act—a struggle which filled the common gaols of the country with earnest men and women—that first drew Harney into politics. He was then sixteen years of age. For three years afterwards

GEORGE JULIAN HARNEY.

(*From a photo taken in* 1886.)

[*To face p.* 218.

he was in the very thick of the Unstamped fight. The battle raged most fiercely around the *Poor Man's Guardian*, which, as Henry Hetherington announced on the title-page, was "published in defiance of law, to try the power of Right against Might." Harney was twice thrown into prison for short terms in London. His offence was that of selling the *Poor Man's Guardian*. Then he went to Derby to commit the same "crime." "One Saturday evening," he wrote, "at a court hastily, unusually, and for all practical purposes privately held, I was sentenced to pay a fine of £20 and costs, or go to prison for six months." He underwent the imprisonment; but the pains of it, as he gratefully recorded, "were somewhat mitigated by the humane intervention of the late Mr. Joseph Strutt—an honoured name—then Mayor." The revolt of the people—for it was a revolt—was, as already narrated, completely successful.

Three years after the imprisonment at Derby the agitation for the People's Charter was in full swing. Notwithstanding his youth, Harney was sufficiently well known throughout the country to be elected one of the delegates for Newcastle to the Convention of 1839. The proper title of that body—for it is as well to be particular in historic matters—was the General Convention of the Industrial Classes.

The delegates for Newcastle—Robert Lowery and Dr. Taylor were Harney's colleagues—were "elected at a large open-air meeting in the Forth on Christmas Day, 1838, which meeting was attended by deputations, in some instances processions, from the district on both sides of the Tyne." Among other extravagant things that Harney seems to have favoured was the "sacred month." It was one of the "ulterior measures" the Convention discussed when the House of Commons had rejected the National Petition for the Charter. All the delegates from Newcastle supported it. But the scheme was foolish, and, being foolish, failed—though it is fair to point out that the old Chartists differed from all later strikers in this, that they sought nothing for themselves alone, and that the sacrifices they proposed to make were intended to achieve objects that would, as they believed, benefit the nation at large.

Harney had the reputation of being a fiery orator. He was certainly consumed with enthusiasm. It was almost impossible for such a man at such a time to avoid coming into collision with the authorities. Two such collisions occurred—first in 1839, for a speech at Birmingham; the second in 1842, for taking part with fifty or sixty others in a convention at Manchester. For the Birmingham speech Harney was arrested in Northumberland, handcuffed to a

constable, and taken back to Warwickshire. The arrest took place at two o'clock in the morning. There were fewer railway facilities in those days than there are now, accounting for the circuitous route the captors pursued with their prisoner. First a hackney coach from Bedlington to Newcastle; then the ferry across the Tyne to Gateshead; then the rail from Gateshead to Carlisle; then the stage coach over Shap Fell to Preston, at that time the terminus of the North-Western Railway; and finally the train from Preston to Birmingham. But the police in the end had all their trouble for nothing, since the grand jury at Warwick declined to find a true bill against their prisoner. Harney was next arrested at Sheffield for the Manchester business. The trial of the fifty or sixty Chartists was held at Lancaster in March, 1843. Harney was appointed by his comrades to lead the defence. This he did with so much energy and eloquence that O'Connor, in the published report of the trial, bore the following testimony:—"It would perhaps be invidious to point particular attention to the address of any individual where all acquitted themselves so well; but the speech of Harney will be read with peculiar interest, and fully justifies the position which he occupied as first speaker." But this trial was abortive, too; for, though the prisoners, or some

of them, were found guilty, the Court of Queen's Bench afterwards pronounced the indictment bad.

Meantime, Harney had gone through his first Parliamentary contest—if such a term can be given to encounters in which never a vote was given to the Chartist candidate. Lord Morpeth, afterwards Earl of Carlisle, was in 1841 seeking the suffrages of the electors of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Harney was nominated in opposition. The nomination took place at Wakefield. It has already been mentioned that an extraordinary effect was produced when, in response to the call for a show of hands for the Chartist, a forest of oak saplings rose in the air. But Harney's great feat in the candidate line was in opposing Lord Palmerston at Tiverton in 1847. Nominated by a Chartist butcher named Rowcliffe, he delivered a vigorous criticism of Lord Palmerston's foreign policy in a speech two hours long. The "judicious bottle-holder," as the noble lord was called, is said to have confessed that his policy had never before been subjected to so searching an examination. Nor did he forget his old opponent. Years afterwards, when somebody was soliciting subscriptions in the lobby of the House of Commons for Chartists in distress, Palmerston asked about his "old acquaintance, one Julian Harney." Being told that

Harney was in America, he replied: "I hope he is well; he gave me a dressing at Tiverton, I remember." The contest at Tiverton was remarkable, inasmuch as the opposition candidate, though he went to the poll, did not receive a single vote. The borough returned two members, and the result of the election is thus recorded in the Parliamentary Poll Book :—

John Heathcote (Liberal) . . .	148
Viscount Palmerston (Liberal) . .	127
George Julian Harney (Chartist) . .	0

Besides lecturing and agitating in all parts of the country, Harney was busy with journalism. He was first sub-editor and then editor of O'Connor's paper, the famous *Northern Star*. When, owing to a disagreement with O'Connor, he severed his connection with the *Star*, he started periodicals of his own—first the *Democratic Review*, then the *Red Republican*, and then the *Friend of the People*. I was a subscriber to them all. Also he founded in 1849 a society called the Fraternal Democrats. I had always voted for Harney as a member of of the Chartist Executive, and now I joined the Fraternal Democrats. A letter to him on the subject brought about an acquaintance which, becoming more and more intimate as the years

advanced, lasted till his death—a period of nearly half a century. The collapse of the Chartist movement drove Harney to other ventures. From 1855 to 1862 he was editing the *Jersey Independent*. Then he betook himself to America, where he remained till, broken in health, he settled down at Richmond-on-Thames to struggle and die. It was under his cheerful and untiring guidance that I saw the sights of Boston in 1882. He was then living at Cambridge, not far from the "spreading chestnut tree" under which the "village smithy" stood, nor far from the house of Longfellow himself. The old Chartist had adorned his home in Massachusetts, as he did afterwards his apartments at Richmond, with portraits and relics of the poets he loved, of the patriots he admired, and of the friends and colleagues with whom he had worked —Shakspeare, Byron, Shelley, Burns; Kosciusko, Kossuth, Mazzini, Hugo; Cobbett, Oastler, Frost, O'Connor; Linton, Cowen, Engels, Marx. Some of the portraits are now mine. Among the relics was a handful of red earth from the memorial mound of Kosciusko at Cracow.

It was Harney's opinion that the art of letter-writing was dying out. He himself, however, did his utmost to keep it alive. Hundreds of his letters, now lying in lavender, testify to his epistolary in-

dustry—all characteristic and all long, some long enough to fill a newspaper column. In his letters as in his private intercourse, he was an incorrigible joker. He joked even about his ailments and his agonies. For years he was a martyr to rheumatism. As far back as January, 1884, he wrote me from Cambridge, U.S. :—"I am 'all in the Downs.' The rheumatism in the shoulder less painful (of late), but always there. But my understandings wuss and wuss—especially my feet. By Heaven! the man with the peas in his shoes hardly had a worse time of it. That ass might have boiled his peas ; but there is no such resource for me. Aching, burning, shooting, and other varieties of pain ; and no sham pain either—as West[1] would say, 'not a blessed dhrop.'" Closing a longer account of his increased infirmities ten years later, he sardonically exclaimed : "Oh! what a piece of work is man!" While residing at Richmond as the guest of a daughter of another old Chartist agitator, though he was wracked and twisted and helpless, he amused everybody with his jests. Mrs. Harney, who had a profitable connection as a teacher of languages in Boston, had to let him come to England alone. Once, when she had crossed the Atlantic to stay with him, she took him out in a Bath chair. Loud

[1] John West was a comrade in the Chartist agitation.

were his jokes with the chairman. "Oh, Julian!" cried Mrs. Harney. "Ah!" said the servant-maid to the hostess, "Mrs. Harney doesn't know Mr. Harney as well as we do!"

All his sufferings notwithstanding, he was able to the very last to write or dictate admirable contributions to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. These contributions were generally on books—not formal reviews, but discursive comments on authors and their works, interspersed with delightful touches of personal experience. It is not a matter of feeling, but of fact, that one of the most effective pieces written in 1896 on the centenary of Burns's death came from Harney's pen. Occasionally he diverged into politics. Here he aroused both anger and enthusiasm—anger in one party, enthusiasm in another. The Editor had as much as he could do to keep the peace among his readers when Harney had his fling at Mr. Gladstone. The old Chartists hated the Whigs more than they hated the Tories. Much in the same way, Harney disliked the Liberals more than he disliked the Conservatives. It was not quite easy to account for his intense rancour against Mr. Gladstone, whom he called, not the Grand Old Man, but the Grand Old Mountebank. The mention of Mr. Gladstone, even after he was dead, seemed to have the same

effect as a red rag is supposed to have on a mad bull. Yet the veteran was judicious and impressive when he discussed political principles instead of political parties. A testimonial was presented to him shortly before he died. Replying to the deputation which presented it, he thoughtfully said: "We have not now so much to seek freedom as to conserve it, to make good use of it, to guard against faddists who would bring us under new restrictions as bad or perhaps worse than the old." For the rest, he expressed his philosophy of government in the pregnant lines of Byron:

> I wish men to be free,
> As much from mobs as kings, from you as me.

The last days of the old Chartist were rendered as happy and as comfortable as his pains and his helplessness would allow by the devoted attentions of his wife. That lady, sacrificing her professional business in America, came over to nurse him to the end. When that end came, there passed away from earth no worthier citizen or braver spirit than George Julian Harney.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LATER CHIEFS OF CHARTISM

THE history of the Chartist movement is divisible into two periods—the period before and the period after 1848. During the former period, the movement was, speaking generally, gaining strength; during the latter, it was unmistakably losing it. Some of the leaders whose names are familiar to the student of politics were connected only with the earlier phase of the agitation; others were connected with both its earlier and its later phases; others, again, came into it only when the popular fervour for the Charter was transparently declining.

The most noted of the later leaders was undoubtedly Ernest Jones. Like Thomas Cooper, Ernest Jones plunged into the agitation, not as a youth, but as a man of mature years. Feargus O'Connor claimed descent from an Irish King; Ernest Jones was the 'godson of a German King. The royal favour was bestowed upon the younger chief of

Chartism while his father was serving as equerry at the Court of Hanover. The family did not return to England till Ernest had already given indications of those poetic and literary talents which he afterwards so abundantly displayed. The fiery and sympathetic spirit of the youth had also been shown in an attempt to assist the insurgent Poles. Although he was educated for the law and was admitted to the Bar, he had no need to pursue the profession till late in life. Certain land speculations of his, however, cost him his fortune. It was then that he joined the Chartists. Mr. George Howell has told the story of these transactions in a series of articles that were published in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. The narrative, based for the most part on a singularly bald diary kept by Ernest Jones, leaves the impression, whether well or ill founded, that Chartism would not have gained its conspicuous recruit if his speculations in land had not terminated disastrously.

But Ernest Jones made up for his late entrance into the movement by the enthusiasm and even violence of his advocacy. It came about that he shared the fate of all the other leading spirits of Chartism : he was prosecuted and imprisoned. No consideration was at that time shown to political prisoners, and less than usual was shown to Ernest

Jones. The indignities he suffered, however, neither damped his ardour nor curbed his tongue. But he could not keep alive a dying cause. A last flicker of the candle occurred when it was proposed to establish a *People's Paper* under the joint editorship and control of Harney and Jones. The proposed editors quarrelled; the scheme came to naught; Harney quitted the field; and his rival was left with a feeble and squalid following to carry on what remained of the agitation. Ernest Jones kept the old flag flying till he was almost starved into surrender. When near its last gasp, he was in the habit of addressing open-air assemblages on Sunday mornings in Copenhagen Fields, now the site of Smithfield Cattle Market. I walked from a distant part of London, through miles of streets, to hear him. It was during the Indian Mutiny. The old fervour and the old eloquence were still to be noted. But the pinched face and the threadbare garments told of trial and suffering. A shabby coat buttoned close up round the throat seemed to conceal the poverty to which a too faithful adherence to a lost cause had reduced him. A year or two later even Ernest Jones had to confess that Chartism was dead. He turned his attention again to the law, settled in Manchester, and was soon on the road to acquiring a lucrative practice.

Then came his great discussion on Democracy with John Stuart Blackie, the famous professor of Edinburgh. It was about this time that I saw and heard him at Newcastle Assizes. Josiah Thomas, a botanical practitioner who was highly respected in the town, was charged with some technical error. Ernest Jones was retained for the defence. The defence was so well managed that the accused, much to the gratification of the general public, was honourably acquitted. Not long afterwards, just when he was on the point of being chosen one of the members for Manchester, Ernest Jones died. Before this sad and sudden event occurred, it is satisfactory to know that Harney and Jones, comrades in a great fight, had become reconciled.

Ernest Jones was a poet: so was Gerald Massey, the Felix Holt of George Eliot's novel. But Gerald Massey was more fortunate that Ernest Jones in the attentions he received from authority; for while Jones was prosecuted by one Government, Massey was favoured with a pension from another. There was nothing dishonourable in either transaction, so far as the recipients of punishment or pension were concerned. It was Massey's poetry that won the kindly notice of the advisers of the Crown. The poet was very young when he caught the fever of revolutionary politics. Poor as he was, he yet

found means to start a revolutionary paper—the *Uxbridge Spirit of Freedom*. If it did not live long, that was not because it had not merit enough to entitle it to live. Unfortunately, the Chartist movement, when Gerald Massey joined it, was in a moribund condition. But he made his mark in it before it died. Harney was publishing his *Red Republican*, one of the best of his literary ventures. There appeared in it some verses in praise of Marat that seemed to ring like a trumpet. They were written by the Hon. George Sydney Smythe, afterwards Lord Strangford. Harney had copied them from a work entitled "Historic Fancies." No young Revolutionist could have read them without a thrill. Far greater was the thrilling sensation when the verses were dramatically recited. Gerald Massey used to recite them at Chartist meetings. A friend of mine who had heard him described the effect as magical. But the poet not only declaimed the inspiring poems of others: he wrote inspiring poems of his own. One of these, appearing in Harney's publication, led on to fortune. It is Harney who tells the story. I had a long letter from him in 1884—as long as this chapter—written from Cambridge, Boston, Massachusetts, where I had enjoyed his hospitality two years before. The letter is full of characteristic humour—as, indeed,

all his letters were. The humour is notable even in the way he relates how Gerald Massey came to attract the notice of the authorities:—"Hepworth Dixon had no umbrella. Taking refuge from the rain in a news-shop doorway, he saw the *Red Republican*. He bought a copy, and read Gerald Massey's 'Song of the Red Republican.' That introduced Massey to the *Athenæum*. The *Athenæum* introduced Massey to good society. Lord Alfred and Lady Beatrice were struck by the beauty of the poetry and the face of the young R.R.; and so, and so, at last a pension." The poet has enjoyed the pension for many years, has devoted much of his time since to inquiries into mystic subjects, but did not forget his old comrade when a testimonial, mainly promoted by the Editor of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, was presented to George Julian Harney on the anniversary of his eightieth birthday.

The founder of *Reynolds's Newspaper* was better known to the public of his day as a writer of romances than as a political leader. Yet he came to the front as a Chartist chief subsequent to the ferment which the Revolution of 1848 caused all over the Continent. George W. M. Reynolds occupied about the same position in English literature as Eugene Sue occupied in French literature. The

stories he published dealt mainly with mysteries and scandals, especially mysteries and scandals of courts and society. To a certain extent he was before his time. The reading public in the middle years of the century thought his romances coarse and vulgar, and left them to the appreciation of the patrons of penny numbers. With the taste for sensation and salacious details which the modern novelist and the modern dramatist have cultivated, it is not at all unlikely that he would, if he had flourished at the end of the century, have been admitted to the hierarchy of fiction. It was understood that he was the son of an admiral, and that he had wasted a fortune of ten thousand pounds in the attempt to establish a daily newspaper before he found his vocation as the author of highly-flavoured tales. *Reynolds's Miscellany* was a popular periodical when the excitement produced by the French Revolution encouraged its proprietor to undertake another adventure. This was *Reynolds's Political Instructor*, to which Bronterre O'Brien and other Chartists and Democrats contributed, and in which the portraits and biographies of prominent Chartists and Democrats were printed every week. *Reynolds's Political Instructor* was the forerunner of *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*. Reynolds himself came then before the public in person, made speeches

on Chartist platforms, and was elected a member of the Chartist Executive. I do not think, however, that any large number of Chartists accepted him seriously. O'Connor and O'Brien, Jones and Harney, all had their followers; but Reynolds had no such distinction. Indeed, it was rather as a charlatan and a trader than as a genuine politician that G. W. M. was generally regarded by the rank and file of Chartism.

The movement was already fast declining when Thornton Hunt, George Jacob Holyoake, and William James Linton began to take an active interest in its fortunes. Hunt was less of a Chartist than a *Littérateur*, Holyoake less of a Chartist than a Socialist, Linton less of a Chartist than a Republican. The election of all to the Chartist Executive failed to save the cause. R. G. Gammage and James Finlen were still lecturing in the provinces; but George White, John West, and James Leech seemed to have dropped out of the running. The Executive consisted of nine members. Of these nine members on January 1st, 1850, only two or three are remembered even by name now:—Thomas Brown, James Grassby, Thomas Miles, Edmund Stallwood, William Davies, G. J. Harney, John Milne, G. W. M. Reynolds, and John Arnott. An election later in the same year gave the following

result :—Reynolds, 1,805 ; Harney, 1,774 ; Jones, 1,757 ; Arnott, 1,505 ; O'Connor, 1,314 ; Holyoake, 1,021 ; Davies, 858 ; Grassby, 811 ; Milne, 709. Not elected :—Hunt, 707 ; Stallwood, 636 ; Fussell, 611 ; Miles, 515 ; Le Blond, 456 ; Linton, 402 ; Wheeler, 350 ; Shaw, 326 ; Leno, 94 ; Delaforce, 89; Ferdinando, 59; Finlen, 44. Thornton Hunt was elected subsequently, but Bronterre O'Brien, Gerald Massey, and Thomas Cooper had declined to stand. It will be noted that the highest vote in 1850 was 1,805, indicating that the number of active members of the National Chartist Association was probably not more than two or three thousand. In 1852, however, even this small membership must have fallen off one-half, for the highest vote recorded then was only 900. Four new names appear in the list of the Executive for that year—those of W. J. Linton, John Shaw, J. J. Beezer, and Thomas Martin Wheeler. Anthony came to bury Cæsar, not to praise him. The new members must have come to bury Chartism, not to praise it. Funds were falling short, too. The subscriptions for the first quarter of 1852 amounted to no more than £27—hardly sufficient to pay the secretary's salary, not to speak of office expenses, with never a penny for printing or propagandism. The Chartist

movement was indeed dead, though neither then nor later was there any formal burial.

But the movement could not in one sense be considered to have failed. The principles embodied in the Charter have been at least partially recognised. The suffrage has been extended; the property qualification has been abolished; vote by ballot has been enacted; and the anomalies connected with electoral divisions have been rectified. Payment of members and annual Parliaments are really the only two of the six points of the Charter that yet remain untouched. The changes effected in the law, however, are less remarkable than the changes effected in public sentiment. People who have not shared in the hopes of the Chartists, who have no personal knowledge of the deep and intense feelings which animated them, can have little conception of the difference between our own times and those of fifty or sixty years ago. The whole governing classes—Whigs even more than Tories—were not only disliked, they were positively hated by the working population. Nor was this hostility to their own countrymen less manifest on the side of the "better orders." More or less of the antagonism here indicated continued down to the death of Lord Palmerston. Then a transformation was worked in the sentiments of the great body

of the people. Thanks to the political earnestness, but still more to the political intrepidity, of later statesmen, working men, enfranchised by household suffrage, commenced for the first time to associate themselves closely and actively with the orthodox parties in the State. We still have our disputes; we still differ materially in opinion on questions of the day; we still prefer Mr. Balfour to Sir Campbell-Bannerman or Sir Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Balfour; but we are no longer, in the sense we once were, two nations.

CHAPTER XXV

A ROMANCE OF THE PEERAGE

DURING the whole period of the Chartist agitation, and indeed for years before and after it, the representation of Cheltenham was controlled and practically owned by the Berkeleys. But who were the Berkeleys? The answer to that question is a romance of the peerage that has frequently been recounted before the law courts.

The romance begins towards the end of the eighteenth century. Berkeley Castle, the Berkeley estates, and the Berkeley earldom were held in 1784 by Frederick Augustus, the fifth Earl of Berkeley. Frederick Augustus seems to have been a rake of the first water. The evidence adduced at the several trials to establish the claim to the earldom leaves no doubt on that point. Nor does the lady whom he married after many years of illicit connection appear to have been a model of virtue. The lady was Mary Cole—called by the common folk Moll Cole—the daughter of a Gloucester butcher. Mary,

as well as at least one of her sisters, fell an easy prey to the blandishments of rank and wealth. Both were no doubt attractive in person, and both became the mistresses of men of fashion. Susan figures only in the chronicles of scandal; but Mary, owing to the attempts that were made to prove that she was married to the Earl of Berkeley eleven years before she actually was married, figured also in the chronicles of the law. None of these discreditable facts would perhaps have become public property if the illegitimate products of Mary's misalliance had shown the same respect for the honour of their mother as the eldest of her legitimate sons did.

Mary Cole gave birth to several sons before she became Countess of Berkeley. William Fitzhardinge Berkeley, afterwards Earl Fitzhardinge, was the eldest of these sons. Among the others were Henry Fitzhardinge Berkeley, member for Bristol, the mover of an annual resolution in favour of the Ballot; Craven Fitzhardinge Berkeley, member for Cheltenham, but not otherwise notable; and Maurice Fitzhardinge Berkeley, an Admiral of the Fleet and member for Gloucester, who, on the death of his elder brother, was elevated to the peerage as Baron Fitzhardinge. There were also legitimate sons of the connection between Mary Cole and the fifth

Earl of Berkeley, for the couple were married at St. Mary's, Lambeth, in 1796. The eldest of these legitimate sons was Thomas Moreton Fitzhardinge Berkeley, while another was Grantley Fitzhardinge Berkeley, who made some little noise as a novelist and a writer of books on sporting matters. When the fifth Earl of Berkeley died in 1810, William, the eldest son, who had sat in the House of Commons as Viscount Dursley, claimed the earldom, but, as the result of a great trial in 1811, failed to sustain the claim. Some years later, probably for political reasons, Colonel Berkeley, as William came to be called, was created first Baron Segrave and then Earl Fitzhardinge. The eldest of the legitimate sons of the Earl of Berkeley, Thomas Moreton Fitzhardinge Berkeley, chivalrously declined to claim the peerage and property because it would have been necessary, in order to establish his title, to asperse the character of his mother. The earldom at his death went, therefore, to a distant kinsman, a descendant of the fourth Earl of Berkeley. The ruling of the House of Lords in 1811 was confirmed, after another and last trial, by the House of Lords in 1891. Many extraordinary facts adduced in the case were recited by the Lord Chancellor in delivering the final judgment of the law.

A desire seems to have entered the minds of the Earl and Countess of Berkeley, somewhat late in life, to make out that they had been secretly married in Gloucestershire in 1785, eleven years before they were admitted to have been married in Lambeth. To bolster up this claim there were believed to have been tamperings with the parish register of Berkeley, the earl himself, it was alleged, having had a hand in the forgeries. But Mary Cole, according to her own testimony, was at the very time when the banns of marriage were said to have been published at Berkeley (published, by the way, in an inaudible voice by the officiating clergyman) living in Kent in the service of a Mrs. Foote. Other evidence of the butcher's daughter, contravening the pretensions she subsequently set up, was given at second hand by the Rev. John Chapeau. Mary Cole at the period of the conversation to which the reverend gentleman testified was known as Miss Tudor, the mistress of Lord Berkeley. Mr. Chapeau, taking shelter from the rain in Miss Tudor's house in London, found her discharging a servant who had come from the country, and trying to persuade her to return to her friends. The girl refusing, "saying she liked to stay in London better," Miss Tudor remarked to Mr. Chapeau that "a girl with a good countenance,

and dismissed from service without money, would be sure to fall a prey to some man or other." And then she added that she had once been in a similar situation herself.

The story Miss Tudor thereupon related to Mr. Chapeau, as given in Mr. Chapeau's evidence, is one of the most extraordinary that was ever told, even at second hand, in a court of law. Being discharged and destitute, so she is said to have said, she at first found refuge in the house of a friend of her mother's. The kindness she received there, however, was not long continued; for the gentleman, fearing scandal, informed her that she must go down to her friends in Gloucester. So she was turned adrift with a present. Mary had two sisters in London, one of whom, Ann Farren, was living in dirt and penury. The other sister, Susan, she had been enjoined by her mother never to speak to again. But she was so distressed at the miserable circumstances in which she found Ann Farren, and so reluctant to remain in her house, that she resolved to disobey her mother. And now comes the most wonderful part of the narrative she is alleged to have imparted to Mr. Chapeau :—

I went to my sister Susan's, took up the knocker, and gave a loud rap. Who should come to the door but (as if it had been on purpose) my sister Susan

herself, dressed out in all the paraphernalia of a fine lady going to the opera? She took me into her arms, carried me into the parlour, and gave me refreshment; began to tear a great many valuable laces of 16s. a yard to equip me for the opera, and when I was so dressed I looked like a devil. I went to the opera, and was entertained with it, and at night returned again to my sister's; and there I found a table well spread, not knowing that my sister ever had any fortune. At that table were Lord Berkeley, Sir Thomas Kipworth, I think a Mr. Marriott, and a Mr. Howarth. The evening went off very dull, and they soon left the place. The next night we went to the play in the same manner and returned in the same manner, and with no other difference than a young barrister, whom I thought agreeable, and if I had been frequently with him should have liked him very much. When they went away, I requested my sister to give me a cheerful evening that we might recount over our youthful stories. The day was fixed, and our supper consisted of a roast fowl, sausages, and a bowl of punch. In the midst of our mirth a violent noise was heard in the passage, and in rushed two ruffians, one seizing my sister by the right hand and the other by the left, trying to drag her out of the house in order to carry her to a sponging-house.

The rest of this amazing story is given in Mr. Chapeau's own words:—

She told me the men declared they would not quit Susan, her sister, unless they received a hundred guineas. She fainted away; then, when she came to herself, she

found Lord Berkeley standing by her sister Susan who was not there before. Miss Tudor fell upon her knees, and desired my Lord Berkeley to liberate her sister; that she had no money to do it herself, and, if he would do it, he might do whatever he would with her own person. He paid down a hundred guineas; the ruffians quitted their hold; and my lord carried off the lady. "Mr. Chapeau," she concluded, "I have been as much sold as any lamb that goes to the shambles."

Strange and almost incredible as this narrative is, it was accepted by Lord Eldon in 1811, and was not questioned by his successor eighty years later. Further, as the Lord Chancellor of 1891 remarked, not only was Lady Berkeley not called to contradict it, but evidence was given by the Marquis of Buckingham that corroborated it. Lord Berkeley told him, the marquis deposed, that "he had got hold of Mary Cole in London, and that he had paid a large sum of money for her." The Marquis of Buckingham's story was in other particulars hardly less astounding than that of Mary Cole. The Earl of Berkeley, he said, was afraid, from the circumstances of his family, that the castle and honour of Berkeley would be severed from the title. To avert this catastrophe, as he thought it, he entertained the idea that his brother's son, who would probably inherit the title, should marry his (Lord Berkeley's) illegitimate daughter. The child who

was thus to be bartered was at the time only three years old. But the device, as the Lord Chancellor explained, was not pursued, not because of the infancy of the girl, but because she died before it could be accomplished.

Gossip was making free with Lord Berkeley's affairs even before Lord Berkeley died. Thus Lady Jerningham, whose correspondence was published in 1896, wrote from Brighton in 1806 :—

> Lady Berkeley was a Housemaid, but always a Virtuous Woman. Lord Berkeley's Fancy for Her was so Imperious that he resolved upon regular matrimony. After a time, Repenting of this measure, he prevailed on the Clergyman to tear the Leaf out of the Register that witnessed his being a married man. But then again Regret Came, as a Child had arrived every year, so He married the same Maid again; and the fourth Son was Supposed to be the inheritor of his title. But soon after, the Clergyman who had first tied Him in Wedlock dyeing, He then declared the date of his previous marriage and proclaimed that his first Born Son was Lord Dursley. He Could not Say this during the Clergyman's Life, as the tearing the Register is Felony. So all this made a sad work, but Lord Thurlow declared there is not a doubt but that the first marriage was Legal, and the Eldest Son is accordingly Stiled Lord Dursley.

The sons of the fifth Earl of Berkeley, legitimate and illegitimate, washed a lot of their dirty linen

in public. William, the eldest son, was, like his father, a desperate rake, and made his house at Cheltenham—where he lived at one time with the wife of Alfred Bunn, the "poet Bunn" of Drury Lane—the centre of many scandals.[1] A fascinating Don Juan he must have been too; for it was said that prudent mammas made it a point of sending their daughters away when his lordship came to town. Nevertheless, it was the custom to ring the bells of the parish church when Lothario paid his periodical visits to German Cottage. Moreover, he propitiated the fashionable classes by providing stags for them to hunt and hounds with which to hunt them. But it came to pass one day that the parish bells were silent when Earl Fitzhardinge honoured the place with his presence. Loud was the clamour which arose, especially as about the same time the nominee of Berkeley Castle was rejected by the electors. The august patron of the borough, we were told, would withdraw his patronage; his house and furniture would be put up to auction; the glory of German Cottage would be no more. As a matter of fact, he did for a season refuse to supply the stags for the

[1] Macready, the celebrated tragedian, described Bunn at this time as living on the price of his wife's infamy. The poet's wife, it was alleged, was loaned to the peer for a handsome consideration.

hunt, and imperiously demanded that the hounds should be at once returned to Berkeley Castle. A furious quarrel broke out among the brothers also. Grantley, who figured conspicuously in the quarrel, was member for one of the divisions of Gloucestershire. As I remember him, he was a tremendous dandy. It was during the general election of 1847, when Grantley Berkeley had revolted against his brother, and when Grenville Berkeley, a cousin of his, was set up in opposition, that the family's dirty linen was washed in public. Grantley, in spite of his dandified appearance, or perhaps because of it, was the more popular candidate ; anyway, he carried the election against Grenville.[1] The political litera-

[1] Grantley Berkeley's blackguardism is another story. The facts of the matter, or some of them, have been pieced together in a letter from an old friend in Chicago—Mr. James Charlton, the *doyen* of American passenger agents. What follows is a mere re-arrangement of Mr. Charlton's narrative.

William Maginn, the Captain Shandon of Thackeray's "Pendennis," and peradventure the "most protean genius that ever appeared in literature," was a writer in *Fraser's Magazine*, as well as one of the largest contributors to the "Noctes Ambrosiana" in *Blackwood*. It was in the former capacity that he came into conflict with the Hon. Grantley Fitzhardinge Berkeley.

Grantley wrote a novel entitled "Berkeley Castle," which was reviewed and scarified by Maginn in No. 123 of *Fraser's Magazine*. The author of the novel took his revenge on the publisher of the magazine. Fraser was physically weak, while his assailant was physically powerful. The result was that Fraser never recovered from the shock of that brutal assault, and finally died of it. An action at law cost Berkeley £100, and a cross-action, Berkeley *v.* Fraser, ended in a verdict for forty shillings.

ture of the time, however, throughout the whole constituency of West Gloucestershire was besmirched with personal scandals.

The story of the Berkeley family, interesting as

The legal proceedings were followed by a duel. Maginn acknowledged the authorship of the article in *Fraser*. Then came "coffee and pistols for two." Honour was satisfied when the heel of Maginn's boot and the collar of Berkeley's coat were both grazed.

Failing to shoot his critic, Grantley Berkeley did his best and wickedest to blast the reputation of an innocent girl. Years after, when he came to write his "Reminiscences," he wove together a tissue of falsehoods and misrepresentations relating to Maginn and Miss Landon, the unfortunate L. E. L.

The story of L. E. L. is one of the saddest in English literature. Miss Landon was at one time engaged to John Forster, the biographer of Dickens. As Forster "never hesitated to correct Dickens, or anybody else, about almost everything, and as he knew everything and a great deal more, and had absolute faith in his own point of view and in nobody else's," it is doubtful whether the gentle poetess would have had a happy life with him. Anyway, affected by the slanders which "spiteful scoundrels" like Grantley Berkeley had circulated about her, Miss Landon declined the offer of Forster's hand. Afterwards she went to Cape Coast Castle. The mystery of her death there has never been satisfactorily solved.

Ernest Jones, subsequent to his release from prison, published several poetical pieces in his "Notes to the People." One was entited "The New World," which, during the Indian Mutiny, he re-issued under the more attractive title of "The Revolt of Hindostan." In the original publication the following four lines occur:—

> Pale rose an anxious face from Niger's wave,
> And murdered Park one groan of anguish gave;
> While distant ocean, starting at the knell,
> Washed from its sands the letters L. E. L.

Grantley Berkeley died on February 23rd, 1881, at the age of eighty-

a romance of the peerage, is not without interest also as exemplifying the enormous political influence which territorial nobles, notwithstanding the scandal of their private lives, exercised in England even after the Reform Bill of 1832.

one. Ten years before, Mortimer Collins published a novel, "Marquis and Merchant," which he dedicated "to the Hon. Grantley Fitzhardinge Berkeley, who, both in Life and Literature, shows the true meaning of the adage—'Whom the gods love die young.'" To appreciate the force and sting of the dedication one has to remember that the Honourable Grantley was even then more than seventy years old.

CHAPTER XXVI

OLD ELECTION PRACTICES

THE Ballot is said to have robbed the general election of all its colour and picturesqueness. It is true. An election now is a humdrum affair—tame, featureless, devoid of bustle and animation. Of course I am speaking comparatively. Very different were political contests when every man knew how every other man voted, when candidates had to stand the ordeal of the hustings, when the state of the poll was declared every hour of the day, and when the victor was carried in triumph round the constituency that had chosen him. But these were the days, too, when all manner of evils were rampant—bribery, treating, intimidation, and violence. After all, the old contests are pleasanter to remember than they were to witness.

Preparations for a contest were commenced, as a rule, long before the contest itself would occur. Party paraphernalia, indeed, were generally ready to be produced the moment they were wanted.

This especially was the case when aristocratic families supplied hereditary candidates, as the Berkeleys did in Cheltenham. The Berkeleys were Whigs, and the Whig colours were orange and green. Flags and banners of these tints, and bearing the old Whig mottoes and devices, were brought forth to do duty at every election, and stowed away at the end of it in readiness for the next occasion. They made a brave show, these flags and banners, as they were borne aloft through streets and squares. Bands of music and processions of partisans accompanied them in their peregrinations. Night after night for weeks before the nomination the town was kept alive with party clamour. Blue was the Tory colour; but as the Tories were not so well organized as the Whigs, and, moreover, had no hereditary candidates, we usually saw fewer of their banners and heard fewer of their bands. Party tunes were not numerous, but they were sufficiently distinct and lively to set the rival partisans at loggerheads. "Bonnets of Blue" was the favourite tune of the Tories, "Old Dan Tucker" that of the Whigs. Fights were frequent, while dissipation was general. Black eyes and broken heads were more numerous at election times than at peace meetings in war times. Terrible were the ructions when two processions met, particularly in a narrow street, and

when neither would give way to the other. On these occasions, banners and trumpets, with the heads of the men who carried or blew them, came to general grief. They were stirring times, I tell you, the election times of other days.

The first formal business of the election took place in the open—before all the people. This was the nomination at the hustings. The hustings in our case were erected in Sandford Fields—a half-private, half-common piece of property on the outskirts of the borough. There a great structure of wood, divided into compartments for the opposing candidates and their friends, with a compartment for the returning officer and his assistants between them, was set up ready for the interesting function. The supporters of the Whig candidate, all with favours and many with banners, bands of music accompanying them, assembled opposite the Whig compartment. The supporters of the Tory candidate, distinguished in a similar way and cheered by similar devices and strains, arranged themselves opposite the Tory compartment, so that a sharp line divided the two forces. When the candidates appeared, wild shouts of approval or hostility greeted them from the crowd beneath. Nor these only; for rotten oranges and rotten eggs, and occasionally harder but less unsavoury missiles, shot across the

neutral zone to discompose one or other of the parties on the hustings. The returning officer having opened the proceedings, the proposers and seconders of the candidates stepped forward, each being applauded by his own side, but howled at by the other. This formality performed, often in dumb show, the candidates themselves essayed to address the free and independent electors. Meantime, there were free fights where the frontiers of the two crowds joined. But the speaking was at length ended, though hardly a word had been heard. And then the returning officer took a show of hands. A mere formality this, also, for the proposer of the candidate who lost it generally demanded a poll. All was over for the day, except shouting and fighting, band-playing and processioning with banners. Chartist candidates were often nominated, not with the idea of going to the poll, which would have been useless in the then state of the franchise, but for the purpose of making a speech, which pleased the populace at all times. Mr. R. G. Gammage was so nominated at Cheltenham in 1852. But as no compartment was provided for the Chartists on the hustings, he and his proposer and seconder were invited to speak from the place reserved for the returning officer. Gammage's speech was good—we sent a deputation to thank

him for it afterwards—but the show of hands was not on this occasion in favour of the Chartist, as it usually was on the like occasions in other boroughs, but in favour of the Tory candidate.

It should have been said that the sharp electioneerer had done a good stroke of business for his candidate before the rival parties had been gathered round the hustings. Canvassers, messengers, watchers, and so-called workers of all sorts had been engaged at high rates to assist in the election. The number of persons—all voters—appointed to these posts far exceeded the requirements of the candidate. But there was method in the extravagance. It was simply an effective form of bribery. The canvassers and messengers and watchers who were of real service in the contest were early astir on the morning of the poll. Indeed, the confidential men of the party had been at work all night—securing their own voters or spiriting away the voters of the opposite side. For, be it known, there was a great art in corruption. It was not enough to buy a vote : the main thing was to see that the vote was recorded for the right man. The cleverest electioneerer was the electioneerer who could bribe or bottle up the biggest number of the enemy's supporters. And it was in nefarious practices such as this that much of the night preceding

the poll was spent. Free breakfasts and free beer were the order of the polling day. The candidate who was niggardly in providing these comforts for the electors was voted shabby, and was generally defeated. Yes, a contested election was a royal time for the mercenary, the corrupt, the creatures without conscience. Even hired bravoes were sometimes paid to keep the rival intimidators in check—loafers, pugilists, ruffians of every degree. A noted prize-fighter was engaged to supply a band of men of the same stamp as himself for one of the candidates at a Sunderland election, because there was a rumour that the like thing was being done on the part of the other candidate. When the fight was over and the noted prize-fighter was being paid for his services, he quietly informed the election agent that it was he who had set the rumour afloat!

But the poll has been opened. Exciting scenes took place round the polling booths. Voters were brought up—sometimes in batches, sometimes in single file. There was no doubt as to how they voted, for their names and the disposition of their suffrages were inscribed in the poll books. If popular feeling, stimulated by popular treating and popular largesses, happened to run high, the free and independent elector had to run the gauntlet

of a turbulent mob. Whether the voter had been bribed or not, he had still before him the risk of intimidation, especially if he should have had the courage to wear the unpopular colours. Fights of course were frequent in the neighbourhood of the polling booths. Nor were they less frequent, perhaps, around the centres at which the hourly returns of the state of the poll were exposed. These hourly returns were the cause of great excitement and speculation—never allayed all day till the last vote had been recorded and the last return had been issued.

Then came the declaration of the poll—another lively performance, though the partisans of the losing candidate generally left the field to the partisans of the victor. Next day the successful candidate was chaired—that is to say, carted in triumph round the constituency. The most animated and picturesque chairing I recollect occurred in 1847. The Tories that year made a tremendous effort to win the seat. Sir Willoughby Jones was brought from Norfolk to perform the trick. Money was spent as it had been spent in no previous election. Every man who had a vote and was willing to sell it was passing rich for many days after, not to say gloriously drunk also. As, in addition, the Norfolk baronet was a presentable candidate—handsome, gracious, and a fair speaker

—he succeeded in ousting the sitting member, the Hon. Craven F. Berkeley, who had sat for the borough ever since its enfranchisement in 1832. The jubilation of the Tories found expression in the ceremony of chairing. A brewer's dray, covered with blue cloth, surmounted by a throne upholstered in blue silk, was drawn by a team of brewers' horses caparisoned in blue trappings. Aloft was seated in imperial pomp and isolation the victorious favourite, also arrayed in all the glory of the party colour, smiling and bowing in acknowledgment of the loud hozannas of the crowd below and around. The march through the town, with bands blaring and banners waving, was a memorable spectacle. The Tories that day painted the town blue. But the triumph, as we shall see, was but short-lived.

The election usually ended with the chairing of of the candidate, unless, as happened in 1847, there was a petition against his return, in which case the venal voter got a chance of a free trip to London, and free entertainment while there, with of course a handsome *douceur* besides, in order to testify before a committee of the House of Commons to the scandalous conduct of the agent who had corrupted him. If the petition was dismissed, all was over save paying the piper. But if the candidate was unseated, and the constituency was not disfran-

chised, another election took place, though on this occasion, should the agents have become more cautious, there was less treating and less bribery, and consequently less violence and debauchery. The triumph of the Tories in 1847 was, as I have said, short-lived. Their candidate was unseated in the following year, when a new election was held. This time it was the turn of the Whigs to crow, and the turn of the Tories to petition. A local brewer, Mr. James Agg-Gardner, who had been nominated by the Tories in 1841, was selected once more to contest the seat against Mr. Craven Berkeley. The decision of the previous year was reversed in 1848. Again there was a petition, and again the petition was successful. Mr. Craven Berkeley was unseated. Another election was held—the third within two years. Mr. Grenville Charles Lennox Berkeley, nominated in the place of his cousin Craven, won the seat and held it for four years. Then the old rivals confronted each other again, with the result that Berkeley Castle resumed its dominion. Thereafter a Berkeley succeeded a Berkeley for many years—almost down to the time when Whig and Tory both changed sides.

Sir Willoughby Jones died at his seat, Cranmer Hall, Norfolk, in 1884. Mr. Ruskin was writing his autobiography, "Præterita," in 1885. Some

of his school-fellows came up for mention and judgment, among them "A fine, lively boy, Willoughby Jones, afterwards Sir W., and only lately, to my sorrow, dead." It was announced at his death that the old Cheltenham candidate had long ago joined the Liberal party, "with which he remained identified to the close of his career." Two years later another conversion was announced. The newspapers of August, 1886, proclaimed it thus: "The Berkeley family, whose residence is the historic castle of that name in Gloucestershire, has for generations been noted for its strong support of the Liberal cause. This state of things has now been altered, Lord Fitzhardinge, the head of the Berkeleys, having accepted the post of president of the Tewkesbury Conservative Association." These were not the only transformations that have been witnessed since the forties and fifties. Whigs have become Liberals; Tories have become Conservatives; Liberals and Conservatives have become Unionists. The hustings have disappeared; successful candidates are no longer chaired; constituencies are not now debauched; voters are seldom either bribed or brow-beaten. Here, again, the old order hath yielded place to the new. The political conditions described in this veracious chapter are matters of ancient and almost forgotten history.

CHAPTER XXVII

IDEAL REPUBLICANISM

CHARTISM was not satisfying. We were Chartists and something more—we young men of Cheltenham. What that something more was we probably could not at first, if we had been asked, have clearly defined. The Charter, as a declaration of rights, was excellent. It covered the whole ground of political demand. But popular power proclaimed—what then? Even if roast beef came the day after, it would be but a sorry triumph. A pitiful life, indeed, is that which is content with beer and skittles. Higher aspirations entered our heads, suffused our thoughts, coloured our dreams. "Happiness," we had been told, "is a poor word: find a better." We were trying to find a better. Some of us were Democrats, pledged to afford material help and sympathy to the struggling peoples of the Continent. George Julian Harney had founded the movement, which had for its organ a monthly publication, edited by himself, called the

Democratic Review. This was better. But we longed for something better still. We had found a programme, but we wanted a religion. It came to us from Italy.

Another of Harney's publications bore a fierce and defiant title—the *Red Republican.* We did not like the title. It savoured of blood. Also it seemed to suggest a return of the Reign of Terror, with new Marats and Couthons to horrify the world. We were Republicans, but not Red Republicans. The title was altered to the *Friend of the People.* The paper was the same, though the name was changed. No paper then published so satisfied our longings for an ideal. Presently there appeared in it a series of articles in exposition of the principles of Republicanism. The writer was W. J. Linton, poet, artist, propagandist. The scheme Mr. Linton put before his readers was based on a proclamation which the Central Democratic Committee had issued to the peoples on the organization of Democracy. The proclamation, dated London, July 22nd, 1850, was signed by Joseph Mazzini, as representing Italy; Ledru Rollin, as representing France; Albert Darasz, delegate of the Polish Democratic Centralization; and Arnold Ruge, member of the National Assembly at Frankfort. It was the work of Mazzini, the

greatest teacher since Christ. As a declaration of principles, I do not hesitate to say that it is loftier, broader, and more enduring than even the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence was meant for a nation: the Proclamation to the People was meant for mankind. Let me quote a few of its inspiring passages :—

We believe in the progressive development of human faculties and forces in the direction of the moral law which has been imposed upon us.

We believe in association as the only regular means which can attain this end.

We believe that the interpretation of the moral law and rule of progress cannot be confided to a caste or to an individual, but ought to be confided to the people enlightened by national education, directed by those among them whom virtue and genius point out to them as their best.

We believe in the sacredness of both individuality and society, which ought not to be effaced, nor to combat, but to harmonise together for the amelioration of all by all.

We believe in Liberty, without which all human responsibility vanishes:

In Equality, without which Liberty is only a deception:

In Fraternity, without which Liberty and Equality would be only means without end:

In Association, without which Fraternity would be an unrealisable programme:

In Family, City, and Country, as so many progressive spheres in which man ought to grow in the knowledge and practice of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Association.

We believe in the holiness of work, in its inviolability, in the property which proceeds from it as its sign and its fruit:

In the duty of society to furnish the element of material work by credit, of intellectual and moral work by education:

In the duty of the individual to make use of it with the utmost concurrence of his faculties for the common amelioration.

We believe, to resume, in a social state, having God and His law at the summit—the People, the universality of the citizens, free and equal, at its base—progress for rule, association as means, devotion for baptism, genius and virtue for lights upon the way.

And that which we believe to be true for a single people we believe to be true for all. There is but one sun in heaven for the whole earth: there is but one law of truth and justice for all who people it.

The authors of the proclamation proceeded in the same document to apply to nations the principles they had laid down for individuals:—

We believe, in a word, in a general organization, having God and His law at the summit—Humanity, the universality of nations, free and equal, at its base—common progress for end, alliance for means, the example of those peoples most loving and most devoted for encouragement on the way.

The French Revolution had deified Right, which, in a narrow and restricted sense, meant selfishness, indulgence, mere material comfort. It was reserved for Mazzini to preach the higher doctrine, Duty, which meant sacrifice, service, endeavour, the devotion of all the faculties possessed and all the powers acquired to the welfare and improvement of humanity. The Duties of Man, in the great Italian's conception of the revolutionary programme, were the necessary accompaniment of the Rights of Man. Rights, indeed, took a secondary place, being only, as the proclamation set forth, "the results of accomplished duties"—of value only as enabling nations as well as individuals to fulfil their obligations to each other. Decorations are worthless shams that are not the symbols of honours bravely won. So are rights the reward of enterprise and valour: nor reward only, but the means and opportunity of doing our special work in the world, helping the weak, consoling the afflicted, encouraging the reliant, paying tribute to virtue and genius. This exalted idea runs all through Mazzini's teachings; but it is perhaps best expounded in his masterly treatise on the "Duties of Man." It found expression in his private letters as well as in his public writings: it was part of himself; and it is the legacy he left to mankind. "Life," he

wrote to Henry Vincent, "life is a mission, not a seeking for happiness." And the humble followers of Mazzini adopted his motto of "God and the People," and drew solace from the old Puritan consolation—"Let it not grieve you that you have been the instruments to break the ice for others: the honour shall be yours to the world's end."

The exposition of the greatest democratic document of the century fell upon the minds of some of the young men of the period like fertilising rain upon a parching soil. Here was the "something more" for which they had been yearning. Here, indeed, was a doctrine that deserved their devotion. Here, in a word, was the religion for which they were longing and pining and praying. Yes, they were Republicans—these ardent youths—with a more definite notion of what the word implied than the mere rejection of monarchy. The Republic, as they understood it, was not so much a form of government as a system of morals, a law of life, a creed, a faith, a new and benign gospel. Uneffaced—perhaps ineffaceable too—is the recollection of the thrill of delight that the revelation caused. And when the author, at the close of his papers, asked all who approved of the principles he had expounded to communicate with him at Miteside, Ravenglass,

Cumberland, the young enthusiasts rejoiced to believe that a chance might be given them to participate in a propaganda that would and must end in the redemption of the world.

The scheme put before them was that they should in their different localities form associations for the "teaching of republican principles." It was an educational, not a revolutionary work, to which they were summoned. Along with a small band of ardent youths in the town, I entered eagerly into the scheme—how eagerly, and with what temerity and conceit, may be surmised from the fact that I accepted the post of president of the local society months before I was out of my teens. Part of our method of procedure was to hold family meetings, after the manner of the old Methodists. These meetings, held weekly in the homes of the members, were intended for instruction as well as propagandism. The works of the revolutionary leaders were read and discussed; candidates for membership were examined; the prospects of the cause abroad and at home were pondered; plans were devised for making our ideas known by personal canvassing and the circulation of tracts; and occasionally essays by the members themselves on some point of doctrine or practice were produced for consideration and debate. Old Chartists looked askance at our

proceedings, called us foolish striplings, and would have nothing to do with us. When Ernest Jones, on a visit to the town, was asked what he thought of the movement, he replied that it was just another division in the ranks, and as such calculated to impede the general advance of the popular cause. But we were never strong enough to impede anything; for our rules were so strict and our demands on the understanding of our associates were so exigent that our total strength at the best of times could not have exceeded a score. I have indicated that candidates for admission to our society had to undergo an examination. It was no formal examination either. We insisted that they should thoroughly comprehend the principles that they were going to teach. It was not enough that they should call themselves Republicans: we demanded that they should give good reasons for the faith that was in them. There was therefore a catechism which all candidates were required to master. So our comrades were few. I find in an old diary for May, 1851, the following statement on the subject:—"Our numbers have augmented considerably, amounting to twelve or thirteen members, with great hopes of getting more." But we were not only few in numbers—we were miserably poor in purse. A report of a family meeting held in April

of the same year records that "sixpence by voluntary contribution was gathered." As a matter of fact, we were as poor as the Apostles, and not much more numerous. Still, small as was the contingent we could muster, we were young, earnest, and enthusiastic, and, what was more, we knew we had got an idea which would regenerate mankind if mankind would only accept it. One does not need to say that the time for that acceptance seems as far off as ever.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THOUGHT AND ACTION

MAZZINI had taught us that "every divorce between thought and action is fatal." Wherefore to the best of our modest means we acted upon our thoughts. The idea of Fraternity was as sacred to us as any other of the ideas expressed in our republican formula. And Fraternity, if it meant anything, meant the offer of such help as we could give to the struggling peoples of the Continent. Help, however, by the time of which I am writing, could only take the form of comfort and protection for the exile.

The Revolution of February had been followed by insurrections in almost all the countries of Europe—in Venice and Vienna, in Rome and Berlin, in Pesth and Dresden. But all had failed, so that the last state of the peoples was worse than the first. The struggle in Hungary was longest sustained. We, who had followed with absorbing interest the varying fortunes of the Magyars, and

had read with unbounded delight of the valiant feats of Bem and Dembinski, were cast into the depths of dismay when we heard of the surrender of Georgey and the flight of Kossuth. All was over. Despotism had once more triumphed. Even France had chosen an adventurer who was afterwards to seize her by the throat. It was no longer possible to encourage insurgents in the field. The duty that now devolved upon us was to clothe and feed the refugees who had sought our shores. They came in great numbers—Poles and Hungarians chiefly. Every man of them was a hero, and every one of them was destitute. If ever sympathy was demanded, it was for these victims of fate and tyranny.

My first contribution to the press was written at this time—May, 1851. It was an appeal on behalf of the fugitives who had been landed in Liverpool. The printing of that letter produced an exaltation that no similar honour has ever produced since. An American authoress (Louisa M. Alcott) has described her own feelings when she read that a little tale of hers was going to appear in a Boston paper—one of the "memorable moments" of her life. She was on her way to school. "It was late; it was bitter cold; people jostled me; I was mortally afraid I should be recognised; but

there I stood, feasting my eyes on the fascinating poster, and saying proudly to myself, in the words of the great Vincent Crummles, 'This, this is fame!' That day my pupils had an indulgent teacher; for while they struggled with their pothooks, I was writing immortal works." My own "memorable moment" is still fresh in recollection. It seemed to me that everybody must have read that letter, that everybody must be talking about it, that everybody must be looking at the author as he passed down the street. Nor could there be any doubt that ample provision would now be made for the destitute refugees. What else, I asked myself, could be the result of that eloquent supplication of mine? Alas! we were too poor in Cheltenham to do more than supplicate. All the same, we gave much anxious thought and deliberation to the project of taking charge of at least one of the exiles.

Friends of freedom were active in the same cause in other parts of the country. Committees were formed in many of the large towns to raise funds and locate the soldiers who had fought and failed on the plains of Hungary. There was a public meeting in Newcastle, with Sir John Fife in the chair, and Mr. Joseph Cowen as the chief speaker. But the principal committee was established in

Liverpool, with James Spurr as secretary. A small publication, called the *Refugee Circular*, issued from time to time between April 16th and August 19th, 1851, gave particulars of the disposal of the unfortunates. From a complete collection of these circulars, still preserved, I gather that the North of England provided for no fewer than fifteen, some of whom became afterwards well known in Newcastle and Gateshead. One of them, Constantine Lekawski, was for years connected with the Tyne Ferry Company, but returned to Poland in 1870 and died there; another, Marian Plotnicki, rose to a good position in the firm of Hawks, Crawshay, and Co. Away in Gloucestershire we could render no such help; but we did the next best thing—we subscribed to the utmost of our small means to save the exiles from want and beggary.

Other foreigners came in later years to need our assistance—notably men who had fought with Garibaldi in Rome. Red Shirts, indeed, were at one time as numerous as Poles in England. Italy had claims on our sympathy as strong as Poland. And these claims were kept constantly before the people by the publications of the Society of the Friends of Italy. There was a Society of Friends of Poland, too, with Lord Dudley Stuart at its

head; but it, unfortunately, laboured under the imputation of favouring only the exiled aristocracy of that country. No such disability affected the Italian association. Mazzini had won the admiration and the confidence, not only of his own compatriots, but of many hundreds of conspicuous Englishmen. There were, in fact, countrymen of ours who were as devoted to him as any native of Italian soil. Mr. Sidney Milnes Hawkes, relating how he once undertook a dangerous mission to Paris, assured me that he and others had at that period so little doubt of Mazzini's absolute wisdom and judgment that they would almost have slain their own kindred if he had told them to do it. The Friends of Italy comprised many persons eminent in learning and literature who did not ordinarily concern themselves with the politics of the day. Douglas Jerrold, David Masson, George Dawson, Walter Savage Landor, Francis William Newman—these are some of the names I can recall. And then there were life-long associates with the work which Mazzini was prosecuting—Joseph Cowen, James Stansfeld, and Peter Alfred Taylor. We in Cheltenham were members of the society also. Then and often afterwards we sent our small contributions to Mazzini's special funds—the Shilling Subscription for European Freedom, the loan to the Universal

Republican Alliance, and so forth. But the influence of the Friends of Italy far exceeded the value of the funds they could collect; for there came a time when the very policy of England seemed to be affected by it. When, for instance, Garibaldi made his descent upon Sicily, it was the fortuitous interposition of a British squadron between the Austrian fleet and the Thousand of Marsala that saved the expedition, and so permitted the liberation of Southern Italy.

There were occasions, especially during the reign of Louis Napoleon in France, when the claim of England to offer an asylum to the fugitives from oppression appeared to be in danger. On all such occasions we were instant in protest or denunciation. Out of our scanty means we contrived to print little tracts or leaflets, which we distributed wherever and whenever we had opportunity. One of these tracts or leaflets, written by the present writer, was entitled the "Right of Refuge." It was a vigorous attempt to warn the public of the possible demand that would be made upon the British Cabinet for the expulsion of foreign exiles. Turgid as was the style, and defective as was the composition of the piece, it yet expressed the popular feeling of the day. For once at all events the populace and the propagandists occupied the same ground and

entertained the same ideas. Not long afterwards one of the most powerful Governments of the century fell to pieces in a week over a dastardly attempt to truckle to imperial intimidation on this very subject. England was the sanctuary of nations. No political offender ever sought her protection in vain. It was to maintain this sacred character and to preserve this sacred trust that we poor propagandists spent our substance and exhausted our feeble energies. Even to this day we may claim that herein we did the State some service.

Ten or a dozen years before our small operations were performed great disgrace had been brought upon our country by the subservience of British Ministers to a foreign despotism. The letters of Mazzini had been opened by their order in the Post Office, and the contents had been communicated to the Austrian Government. It was Lord Aberdeen and Sir James Graham who had authorised this infamy. The information thus obtained was supposed to have been used by the Austrians in procuring the capture and execution of the martyrs of Cosenza—Attilio and Emilio Bandiera, together with seven of their comrades. The indignation aroused against the Ministers was intense, particularly against Sir James Graham, who was then Home Secretary. Popular resentment found vent in various

ways. Among others in inscriptions on the envelopes of letters: "Not to be Grahamised." Here was an earlier evidence of that reverence for the right and duty of sheltering the exile which has always been a marked feature of the English character. But it might not be improper in this place to record the fact that certain investigations of Madame Jesse White Mario in Italy has relieved the English Government of part of the odium it brought upon itself. It is true that Mazzini's letters were opened; it is true also that the information they contained was communicated to the Austrian authorities; but it is not true that this information led to the tragedy at Cosenza. Madame Mario, writing from Italy on July 14th, 1895, showed that the Bandieras and their companions were the victims of an Austrian plot. The intentions of the patriots had been made known by a man who lived and moved among the Italian exiles in Paris, but who was proved, when his papers came to be examined after his sudden death, to have been a spy in the service of Prince Metternich and the Austrian police in Milan. More than this, Metternich and the Austrian Government were shown to have actually incited the patriots to land in Calabria, providing them with money and a ship for the voyage, knowing beforehand that the Neapolitan Government would

be ready to capture and execute them! Such is Madame Mario's revelation. It does not relieve Aberdeen and Graham from the odium of having done a shameful thing; but it at least discharges them of the crime of having been instrumental in procuring the slaughter of a band of noble youths.

CHAPTER XXIX

BRANTWOOD

FOLLOWING hard upon the close of Mr. Linton's exposition of republican principles came Mr. Linton's announcement of the *English Republic*. The new publication took the form of a monthly magazine. The editor was its chief contributor. Almost all the original matter that appeared in it was written by him. With the exception of the proclamations and other documents of the Democratic Committee, a series of articles on Russia by Alexander Herzen, a series of extracts from Theodore Parker's sermons, and a paper on Mary Wollstonecraft by an anonymous writer, it may be said that the whole of the contents of the four yearly volumes of the *English Republic*, prose and poetry alike, was the result of one man's effort.

For the first year (1851) the *Republic* appeared in monthly parts at sixpence. Now and then, but not often, there was given a portrait or other engraving by the editor. But the first year's

venture was not a success, so a change was made in the second. Retaining the same shape and size of page, the *Republic* was issued during 1852 and 1853 in the form of a weekly tract. A further change was made in 1854. The *Republic* reverted to the monthly issue, with more portraits and engravings. And thus it continued during that year and for two or three months in 1855, when it finally ceased. The three volumes of the publication are now literary curiosities. But they bear traces on every page of a political earnestness and elevation that contrasts strangely with the frivolous products of a later period. We were dreamers, enthusiasts, fanatics, what you will—we Republicans of the middle of the century; and yet, when one comes to consider the matter, it will be admitted that we set before ourselves a nobler ideal than that which was expressed in the clamour of the Roman populace for bread and the circus—nobler even than the demand of the present day for less work and more football.

The later issues of the *English Republic* (1854-55) were printed at Brantwood—a mansion and small estate on Coniston Water which the help of financial and political friends had enabled the editor to acquire. The mansion was not large, ten or twelve rooms perhaps, and the estate was not productive,

being mostly fell; but the situation, facing the lake and Coniston Old Man, and commanding views of other great mountains, was delightful. There was at one time, I believe, a bench in the gardens which was given the name of Wordsworth's Seat, because the poet of Rydal had said that one of the loveliest prospects in the Lake District could be obtained from the spot. Here a printing establishment was set up for the purpose of producing the *English Republic*. Types and presses had of course to be imported: so had persons to use and work them. I was one of the imported persons. Two other young men—Thomas Hailing and James Glover—were also imported from Cheltenham. We were all members of the Republican Association, and all ardent disciples of Mazzini. Our duties were evenly distributed. I was the compositor of the small establishment, Hailing the pressman, Glover (being a gardener) a sort of man-of-all-work. Between us, labouring earnestly and harmoniously together, we produced the *English Republic*, the *Northern Tribune* (the Newcastle magazine of that name), and such other printed matter as was needed.

Press and cases were at first fixed in one of the bedrooms of the mansion. This, however, was only a temporary arrangement, pending the erection

of a special building—rough, but suitable and commodious—at the rear. Apart from its rude character (funds were not available for architectural adornment), there was only one thing peculiar to the Brantwood Printing House: it bore on its front, scratched in the plaster-work, two inscriptions that must have puzzled the passing country folks—"God and the People" and "Laborare est Orare." Years afterwards, when I walked over to Brantwood, during a short holiday in the Lake District, I noticed that the building had been pulled down. This was not surprising, for the only excuse for its existence was its usefulness, and Mr. Ruskin, who then owned the property, had all his printing done in the South of England.

The sort of work we were doing in the printing-office, as I knew from my intercourse with the villagers in Coniston, caused us to be eyed with suspicion. But it is perhaps a mistake to speak of intercourse with the villagers. As a matter of fact, we succeeded in establishing very little intercourse with them at all. Sometimes they were hardly civil to us; at other times they were decidedly rude. Once, during the severe winter of 1854-55, the winter of the Crimean War, when the upper part of the lake was frozen over, and I ventured on to the ice with the rest, there was

a deliberate and apparently combined attempt to trip me up. We were on intimate terms with nobody; on friendly terms with the schoolmaster and schoolmistress only; on speaking terms with scarcely a dozen people besides. The suspicions of the small tradesmen of Coniston took the unpleasant form of hesitating to measure us for clothes or boots before we could show the money to pay for the goods.[1] But, as neither tailor nor shoemaker was a penny the worse for our transactions with them, it must be presumed that the veiled dislike of the neighbours arose from resentment at the seclusion we deemed it proper to maintain in our printing operations.

Our life at Brantwood was of the most unconventional order. We had no watches, knew no time, ate when we were hungry, and went home

[1] Grief and humiliation resulted from one order given to a Coniston tradesman. It was an order for a pair of boots—Bluchers they were called, after the German general who fought at Waterloo. Heavy, clumsy, shapeless, they were as much like boats as boots. Unfortunately, they were taken to London. There it was intended to use them as office shoes. But they were early discovered. Forthwith they were carried from frame to frame till every compositor in the establishment had had an opportunity of wondering at the monstrous specimens of "clod-hopper fashion." The horrid things could not be disowned, but they were very promptly discarded. If the shoes were a curiosity, so was the shoemaker. It was his custom to physic his apprentice whenever he felt ill himself!

when we were tired. It was a long way home, too. Two of us lived at Yewdale Bridge, three or four miles from Brantwood, while the third lived at Torver, two or three miles further still. Now and then we had to work late into the night, and sometimes all night, to get our publications into the market. On these occasions the journey home seemed dreadfully long and wearisome. As part of our road lay through woods and plantations, the intense darkness of the winter nights made locomotion difficult. The hooting of the owls and the soughing of the wind through the trees did not improve the walk, especially when, as sometimes happened, one or other of us had to perform the journey alone. Once I got a pretty fright myself. It was late at night and pitch dark, the trees overhead hiding even the faint light from the stars. Suddenly there was heard a tremendous clatter some distance behind. Nothing but a herd of wild horses, I thought, could make such a row. I got into a ditch out of the way of the phantom hoofs. The terror was short-lived, for the alarming noise was caused by a collection of dried leaves careering along the hard and frosty road driven before a high wind!

The two of us who lived at Yewdale Bridge, being bachelors, became tenants of a pretty cottage

there. It was unfurnished. Nor had we much furniture of our own besides books and boxes. The window-sill was my desk and a wooden chest my only seat. There was absolutely nothing else in the room except a heap of books and manuscripts scattered over the floor. Our domestic arrangements were on a par with these sumptuous surroundings. A row of bricks did duty for a fender, a stick for a poker, and a sheet of brown paper for a tablecloth. But we were young and hardy then, and our wants were few. The duties of the household were divided between us. While one made the humble beds, the other made the coffee and the porridge. I have no doubt we performed our respective offices with satisfaction. At any rate we found no fault with each other, nor threatened each other with a month's notice. Having no artificial tastes in those days, whatever we may have since acquired, we needed neither beer nor spirits, nor even tobacco ; and, being full of life and vigour and enthusiasm, we were healthy and contented to boot.

For a short period at the commencement of our enterprise we had the assistance in the printing-room of a staymaker—George Robert Vine, a disciple like ourselves. Vine was vain—vainer even than the rest of us. But vanity was not an undesirable quality in his case ; it gave him confidence. And

confidence was essential for the mission he was going to undertake. That mission was nothing less than the conversion of England to Republican ideas. Vine thought himself sufficiently equipped for the venture with a hand-cart and a load of democratic publications, mostly copies of the *English Republic*. The cart was decorated with a flag and a motto. The flag was blue, white, and green, supposed to be the Republican colours; the motto was "God and the People." We never saw the missionary again. Where he got stranded, or how, I never knew, or at all events have forgotten. I know he passed through Preston, because he wrote from that town about a great strike of cotton-spinners that was then in progress. Thereafter, so far as my recollection goes, silence. Vine started on his mission in 1854. Nearly thirty years later the following curious communication was received from him :—

To Linton, New Haven.

Hill Top, Sheffield,
May 20th, 1883.

I will just give you a few words about myself. I am still working at my trade (stay business), and if not enjoying riches, I am enjoying calm. I have been in my leisure hours building up a fame in the scientific world, being recognised by men of science as one of the chief authorities on the class of studies to which I have given particular attention (palæontology); and by my

writings I am pretty well known in scientific circles in America. GEORGE ROBERT VINE.

Vine's failure simply preceded our own. It could not be said that the scheme of establishing a printing-office in a remote corner of the country, seven or eight miles from the nearest railway station, was a very prudent scheme. As all our materials had to be carted over the mountains from Windermere to Brantwood, and all these same materials, after we had converted them into magazines and pamphlets, had to be carted over the mountains from Brantwood to Windermere back again, the whole concern was burdened with unnecessary cost. So, in a little more than a year, there came an end to our hopes and our enterprise together.

Brantwood for a time was rented by Gerald Massey, and at last sold to Mr. Ruskin. But Mr. Ruskin had his doubts about the purchase at one stage of the negotiations. The extension of the railway to Coniston, with a distant view of the obnoxious train service from Brantwood, caused him to hesitate. Ultimately, however, he overcame his scruples, made the home of our experiment his home, and gave to the old mansion on Coniston Water a unique place in the political and literary history of England.

CHAPTER XXX

ON TRAMP

OUR little company at Brantwood was dispersed in the spring of 1855. We had been working together for little more than a year. But the public not wanting our wares or our politics, the *English Republic* expired. This, however, did not mean that we had lost faith in our principles or intended to cease propagating them. Linton went to London to try his fortune with *Pen and Pencil*, an ephemeral competitor of the *Illustrated London News*. I, being the youngest of the party and then unmarried, left first, Hailing and Glover remaining behind to "sweep up." Glover eventually resumed his old occupation of gardener in the neighbourhood of London, while Hailing, before returning to establish the reputation of the Oxford Press in Cheltenham, obtained employment at Windermere. Mr. Garnett, stationer and station-master there, had also a small printing-office. A rather large order had come to him from Harriet

Martineau, then residing at Ambleside. Mrs. Martineau—as she preferred to be called, though she was never married—had received what she thought was a warning to prepare for eventualities. Wishing that the public should receive from herself after her death an account of the transactions in which she had been concerned, rather than learn of them from anybody else less qualified to tell the story, she set about writing her autobiography. And to guard against any tampering with the manuscript when she could no longer prevent it, she wanted the work printed off at once—ready for issue, precisely in the form she desired, as soon as she had departed hence. Hailing was engaged for the job, worked at it for some months, printed one volume and part of another, but, running aground for want of copy, had to leave it for other hands to finish. This was in 1855; but the careful authoress lived for two-and-twenty years after she had brought her book to a conclusion! Creaking doors do sometimes hang long on their hinges.

As for myself, I had a journey of two hundred and seventy-four miles before me, with only seventeen shillings in hand for the undertaking—obviously too small a sum even for a railway ticket. How came this lack of funds? Well, wages were of no consequence to us, so long as we had enough to

pay our way. We hadn't come to Brantwood to make money, but to serve a cause. Besides, we had been preaching the virtue of sacrifice, and now we were practising it. So it never entered our heads to murmur, except, perhaps, when the villagers seemed to doubt our honesty. If subscriptions for the magazine were paid, we had our share of them. But if subscribers failed to subscribe, we were at least testifying to the faith that was in us. Of course we did not live like princes. But what did it matter? We gratefully ate our porridge, and devoutly believed that we were beginning a great work.

When the dream was over—at all events for the present—the prospect of having to take to the road did not alarm me. The loneliness would be tiresome; nor was I without apprehension that I might fall among thieves—as, indeed, I did. But the tramp was nothing, since I had money enough for a bed and a crust on the way. During my apprentice days, I used to envy the ragged and dusty wanderers who were to be seen passing through the town all summer-time. The fields and the woods, the hills and the hedgerows, the rills and the rivers, the songs of the birds and the odours of the flowers—these things, I thought, to say nothing of the chances of communing with

Nature, lent fascination to the life of a tramp. Yes, I hoped to be a tramp myself some day. And now had come the opportunity. So I set off from Coniston with a light heart and a bundle of tracts; for I reckoned that our mission, though we had failed at Brantwood, was by no means ended. The tracts were of course explanatory of republican principles. Some I gave to school children to give to their teachers; some I hung on bushes by the highway; others I distributed among the inmates of the common lodging-houses at which I slept. I talked, too, with the tramps whom I overtook or who overtook me on the road; and I even entered in my diary—now a stained and almost obliterated record—that I thought I had converted a militiaman! Also I called on Republicans whom I knew by name or repute in the towns that lay on my route. There had been an association at Macclesfield. This I endeavoured to resuscitate, but in vain. The efforts that were thus made to spread the true political gospel, feeble and fruitless as they were, helped to relieve the tedium of the long journey. Only once, I fancy, did I feel particularly sad and forlorn. It was on a fine Sunday evening in April, when, at the end of a dreary tramp, I entered Lancaster tired and footsore. The good folks of that town were

enjoying their Sabbath strolls. Then I thought that my own people were at that very hour sauntering through pleasant lanes and pastures at home, while I, a solitary wanderer on the face of the earth, knew not a soul that I met. For a time I felt melancholy and depressed, and wished the long tramp was over.

Besides the bundle of tracts, I was not burdened with much baggage. A small parcel contained everything. Printers need to carry few tools. A composing stick and an apron were all I required to begin work anywhere, and even these were not indispensable. I called at all the newspaper offices on the route, begging some brother man to give me leave to toil. Not an odd job anywhere, nor any relief either except a shilling at Birmingham when I showed my indentures, for I was not a member of the union, there being then no branch at Cheltenham or Coniston. The times were out of joint. It was the winter of the Crimean War—the severest as regards weather, the dreariest as regards depression, the direst as regards distress, that we had had for years. I find in my old diary a note on the state of the country :—"Everywhere the cry is want of work. In Macclesfield especially, steady men, industrious men, have great difficulty in obtaining bread. The militia, some of whom

may not perhaps be so steady, recently disbanded at Stockport, went home to Macclesfield, failed to get work, and returned to re-enlist. The weavers 'play' nearly as often as they work, some of them oftener. 'I have never known such a winter,' has been the expression of all with whom I talked at Macclesfield. One young man in Newcastle-under-Lyme, now compelled to seek bread by 'busking' (singing in public-houses), a thrower by trade, said he had been offered 6*s.* 6*d.* a week at a factory in that town. Another man—a plasterer by trade, who had been out of work for weeks—was offered 25*s.* to do a job for which he would have had to pay 15*s.* to his labourer. The number of tramps I meet on the road—some limping with sore feet, others bending beneath their burdens of care—is positively alarming. Every other man one meets is almost sure to be in search of employment. But notwithstanding all this distress, the beershops are not without customers. Men come and spend their last penny—in one particular case I saw at Preston leaving wife and family at home to starve. In the midst of poverty there is still a deeper degradation—the degradation of drunkenness." When this was the general condition of things, it was not wonderful that the letters of introduction with which I had been furnished availed nothing. Three

of these letters were to gentlemen of the press or having influence with the press—Joseph Livesey, proprietor of the *Preston Guardian*, Edward Peacock, a director of the *Manchester Examiner*, and George Dawson, lecturer and preacher at Birmingham. Mr. Livesey and Mr. Peacock received me courteously; but work there was none. Mr. Dawson was away from home; but Mrs. Dawson saw me instead. She wanted to know what we had been doing at Brantwood. I told her. "You are a pretty lot," she said, laughing, "and we are not much better."

My first night on the road was not comforting. It was spent at Kendal. I knew nobody there: so I asked for accommodation at the sign of the Black Bull. The house seemed small and humble enough to suit my circumstances. I slept with a double-thumbed musician—a drunken performer on the key-bugle who shoved me out of bed. The company at the Black Bull was not much to my liking. It was rowdier than any company I had ever been thrown into before. Early in the evening every man in the tap-room (the only common room in the inn) was maudlin drunk. And the language! Our army in Flanders couldn't have sworn more horribly, not even if there had been a competition in blasphemy. Tired of the men and their conversa-

tion, I went out and bought materials for next morning's breakfast—coffee, sugar, bread, etc.—and then to rest. I was awoke at midnight. The roisterers were coming to roost, bringing bottles of beer with them. The key-bugler, helplessly drunk by this time, was, much to my horror and disgust, put in beside me. He stank like a fitchet, and snored like a saw-mill; but fortunately his back was towards me, as of course mine was towards him. Soon he was fast asleep. And then the trouble began. The strange bedfellow with whom poverty had thus made me acquainted commenced to back himself like a stubborn horse. I shouted to him to desist; but the more I shouted the more he backed—the further I got away from him the nearer he came to me. I was on the edge of the bed by this time. To avert the prospect of a violent ejectment, I reversed the order of things—got out on my side of the bed and got into his. "Now, my friend," I thought, "if you go on backing, it is yourself, and not me, that you'll back on to the floor." My scheme was successful. The musician bothered me no more. I was glad, however, to take an early departure from the Black Bull. Perhaps it should be added that the lodgings there, if nasty, were at all events cheap; for I find a note in my diary, written at noon next day, some miles

from Kendal, that my total expenses thus far had been one and threepence halfpenny.

The second night was connected in a rather curious way with the first. I was overtaken on the road to Lancaster by another musician—a fiddler this time. It turned out that the fiddler had been travelling with the bugler—that they had quarrelled and dissolved partnership. I was in luck's way now ; for my new acquaintance, who had been a sailor on board the *Imperatrice*, and intended to go back to the sea, would take me with him to a house where he was known. The house, kept by one Bartholomew Kelly, was clean and orderly. The company also was an improvement on that of the Black Bull, though most of the component parts of it were beggars and thieves. One of the men was chaffingly asked about his friend Captain Blank. "Oh yes," said he, "I left him yesterday morning." Captain Blank was the governor of Lancaster Gaol! I was seen to be writing—much to the wonderment of the company. "Ah!" said a man who was looking over my shoulder, "I'll put ye on to a splendid lay." It was to start business as a writer of begging letters! Beggars and thieves as they were, the men and women in Bartholomew Kelly's lodging-house treated me as kindly as I had ever been treated anywhere. This, perhaps,

was not an uncommon experience, since the very poorest of the people are frequently the most generous. My friend the fiddler arranged for everything and paid for everything. We were going together to Preston next day—I bound for Manchester, he for Blackburn. For some modest refreshment at Garstang on the road he insisted on paying also. Nor did his consideration end there ; for he took me to all the places I wanted to find in Preston—the printing-offices, the lodging-houses, etc. Here the lodging-houses were so filthy that I preferred taking my chance at a tavern ; but I had to sleep in the same room with two drunken market men. The following day I met my friend again. Again I begged him to let me pay my share of our joint expenses. "No," said he, "I am among friends ; you are not." And we shook hands and parted. We shall never meet more ; but I should deem myself guilty of gross and contemptible ingratitude if I did not retain in my memory to the last day a warm place for John Connolly—sailor, fiddler, tramp.

But I had other experiences of life on the road—curious if not edifying—that must be told in a new chapter.

CHAPTER XXXI

TRAMP LIFE

THE lodging-houses of Preston were too filthy to be trusted; but they could scarcely have been filthier than that which I had the misfortune to sample at Chorley. This place—described in my diary as "a small neat town, supported by its manufactories"—was only nine miles from Preston. I was, however, weary and footsore when I reached it at six o'clock in the evening, for I had been walking about Preston for many hours before resuming my tramp at three o'clock in the afternoon. "When in doubt, ask a policeman." Could he tell me where I could get a bed for the night? My appearance, I dare say, didn't suggest that I wanted one of the best hotels in the town. Anyhow, he directed me to a lodging-house. The Chorley constable was more helpful than a member of the same order whom I encountered when in much the same difficulty some years later on a tour through the Scottish Highlands. The encounter took place

in Callander. Would the policeman be kind enough to give me the name of a good hotel in the place? The reply was not a bad example of Scottish discretion. He didna ken, he said, as it behoved people in autho-rity to be cotious! But the Chorley policeman could hardly be suspected of recommending one fourpenny lodging-house more than another. All the same, I ungratefully wished afterwards that he had sent me somewhere else.

The common room of the common lodging-house at Chorley—a dingy, dirty, squalid apartment—was full of people when I entered it. Most of them were of the tramp type; but one or two girls—probably daughters of the proprietor—were apparently factory operatives. I had not been much edified by the conversation I had heard in similar places. Even that in the thieves' kitchen at Lancaster, though the place was clean and its occupants considerate, was of a coarse and vulgar character. Here, however, I could not qualify the conversation, for the reason that I had not then made the acquaintance of the Lancashire dialect, which, as I listened to it at Chorley, was as much like a foreign language to me as anything I had heard before. Only a word dropped here and there, such as "bobbin" and "mill," led me to infer that the people, for part of the time, were talking about

work at the factories. It was my practice while on tramp to go to bed early—always, however, in fear and trembling least I should have to put up with a bedfellow. I had a couch to myself at Chorley, but I had more bedfellows than I quite knew about at the time. The other three beds in the apartment were occupied by a weaver, a tailor, two labourers, and a bookbinder turned labourer. These five gentlemen combined to produce such a concert in their sleep that night was made hideous. If by accident the performers in the three beds took a short rest, my own bedfellows made the most of the interval. Real repose was quite out of the question, so that I fled from the abode of horrors as soon as daylight enabled me to see that I was putting on my own clothes, and not somebody else's. But my torments were not over when I had escaped from that registered inferno ; for, after all, though I was careful as to the garments I donned, I carried off more than belonged to me. That day was the most miserable I passed in the whole of my tramp. My ankles ached ; my feet were blistered ; all the other unexposed parts of my unfortunate anatomy were in a state of intolerable irritation. Overtaking a waggon, I gave the waggoner twopence to let me ride into Bolton. There the newspaper offices were visited, with of

course the usual result. Then I limped away to Manchester, calling as I passed through Salford at Peel Park, with its Museum and Free Library, at that time an almost isolated example of municipal enlightenment.

The freemasonry of the road is one of the charms of tramping. Every tramp chums with every other tramp, just as if he had known him from boyhood. What is more, almost every tramp thinks it his bounden duty to do his best for his comrade of the hour. It is only the curmudgeons of the profession who behave differently. I fell in with the custom, and could therefore learn nearly all I wanted to know about a place before I reached it. One result of the chumming process was that I did not stop in Manchester, except to call at the newspaper offices. A young fellow who overtook me drew so dismal a picture of the lodging-houses there that I resolved to hurry on to Stockport. But I was too tired and too miserable to walk the five miles further. Consequently, I committed the extravagance of travelling by rail. But I paid dearly for it; for, having to make the journey in an open truck, which at the period did duty for a third-class carriage, I got "a perishment of cold." Then followed a further extravagance. I put up at a coffee-house. Here the bill for tea,

bed, and breakfast amounted to 1*s.* 8*d.* Fancy a tramp indulging in such luxuries! However, I did not lament an expenditure that was so much out of keeping with my financial resources. The comfort, the cleanliness, the quietude of the coffee-house made me a new man next day. All the same, I felt like a criminal, because I feared that I must have left behind many of the undesirable acquaintances I had made at Chorley.

Another adventure befell me at Newcastle-under-Lyme. On the way thither I conferred with the brethren at Macclesfield. There, being among friends, I fared very well. Arrived in Newcastle, I inquired for accommodation at a small inn—the Antelope—but neglected to stipulate for a single bed. That, however, did not matter, I thought, since nobody else was in the house, except drinking people. Even the appearance at a later hour in the evening of an old man and his wife was not disconcerting, because of course the venerable tramps would sleep together. Wherefore I retired to rest in an easy frame of mind. Still I thought it desirable to prepare for the worst. Instead of getting in between the sheets, I got in between in the sheet and the blanket. "Now," I said to myself, "if, contrary to present probabilities, anybody should share the bed with me, there will at

least be a sheet between us." Complacent and satisfied, I went speedily to sleep. An hour or two afterwards I was aroused by the rest of the inmates fumbling up the stairs. The bed was on a landing, with a room beyond it. I listened. Yes, there were three voices—the landlady's, the old man's, and the old woman's. Gracious! they were not going to sleep together, were they? I pretended to be oblivious; but I was wide enough awake when I heard the landlady solving the riddle. "You get in there," she said to the old man; "and you," meaning the old woman, "come in along of me." Sold! Still the sheet would be a protection. I chuckled at my own cleverness and forethought. What it was to anticipate things! The old man got into bed and blew out the candle. Then—oh! horror!—I heard him mutter: "D——! I'm in the wrong place." And he got out of bed and got in again—this time beside me. Sold again, and after all my precautions too! But I fared better than I expected. My new bedfellow behaved better than the drunken bugler at Kendal—better even than the weaver and tailor and labourers at Chorley. I was neither kept awake nor kicked on to the floor.

It was my last unpleasant adventure on the road. My final night as a tramp was spent at Stratford-

on-Avon, which was out of my way, but I wanted to see Shakspeare's birthplace. Here the woman at the inn, when I asked for a drink of water, was amazed. "What!" said she, "can't ye afford a drink of beer?" Well, she would take pity on my poverty. And she gave me a glass of fourpenny. It was vile stuff; but I was thirsty, and the gift was kindly meant. Another day's tramp—thirty-two miles—and I was among friends again. These thirty-two miles seemed shorter than any twenty I had previously walked. Such is the happy effect of the prospect of once more mingling with dear old folks at home.

Mark Twain knew something of the tramp in America—especially the travelling "comp.," who "flitted by in the summer and tarried a day, with his wallet stuffed with one shirt and a hatful of handbills; for if he couldn't get any type to set, he would do a temperance lecture." I also knew the character, long before I became a tramp myself. Some of the fraternity came once and were seen no more; others came round as often as the regulations of the trade society enabled them to draw relief. A man belonging to the former class —this was in 1848—persuaded me to give him a shilling for writing an acrostic, and next night was seen gesticulating on a Chartist platform, partly

for my edification. Two members of the latter class were rather famous in their day. One was the Bonny Light Horseman; another the Prince of Munster.

I had a pretty long acquaintance with the Prince of Munster. Dominic Macarthy had worked for a few months on *Galignani's Messenger* in Paris, and on the strength of this circumstance was considered a person of some note in the trade. He was a good workman; he possessed considerable intelligence; but he was afflicted with an incurable desire for roaming about the country whenever the proper season came round. Every year, or at least as often as relief could be obtained at the societies in the various towns through which he passed, the Prince was accustomed to make his appearance. It frequently happened that a job was to be had in the office in which I was apprenticed, and Dominic in this way became a familiar character in our establishment. As a lad, I liked nothing better than a crack with the royal "comp." Not that I think now that his habits or his influence were altogether wholesome for a youth of an impressionable temperament; for I recollect that he used, when he had the means, to bring into the office a supply of spirits to serve him till he could visit the public-house again. Now and then his

royal highness would disappear beneath his "frame,' and emerge from his seclusion wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, and discharging through the office an odour of Old Tom.

During the few days he remained at a time—and he never remained much longer than a week together—he had frequent "bouts." I remember that he defended these weaknesses of his on the ground that Buchan or some writer on hygienic matters contended that occasional excesses in intoxicating drinks had a healthy effect on the person who gave way to them. Dominic, as I have said, was never able to stay long in one place. When he got his wages, or as much of them as he had not anticipated, on a Saturday night, we could never be sure that he would turn in again on the Monday morning. Indeed, if he had nothing to draw, he was liable to disappear any day. When this happened, we would see nothing more of him till he came his rounds again a year later. The passion for roving was too strong to be resisted for many days together. The Prince could no more settle in one town in summer-time than a swallow can resist the impulse to seek another clime.

Later on in life I made Dominic's acquaintance in London. There he invariably spent the winter months hanging about the office of the society in

Racquet Court, and getting an occasional job as a "grass hand," until the return of spring enabled him to resume his vagabond life.

Some years passed. I was then in Newcastle. One night, when leaving the office, I heard my name pronounced as I passed a ragged figure standing near the door. Turning round, I discovered that I had been accosted by my old friend the Prince of Munster. His highness was raggeder, haggarder, and dirtier than I had ever seen him before. A quarter of a century of wandering hither and thither, together with the unknown quantity of spirits he must have consumed in that time, had told heavily on the Prince. I took him home with me; I gave him a good supper; I supplied him with a suit of old clothes; and I set him on his way rejoicing with a few shillings in his pocket. I never saw him again. The probability is that he died in some workhouse hospital or other.

Dominic Macarthy always seemed to me a type of the vagabond class. And I never think of him, and of my own feelings when I first made his acquaintance, without believing that I had a narrow escape of becoming a vagabond too.

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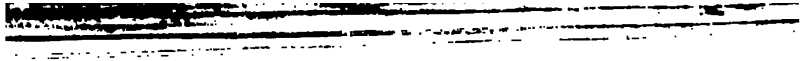

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